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## STORIES



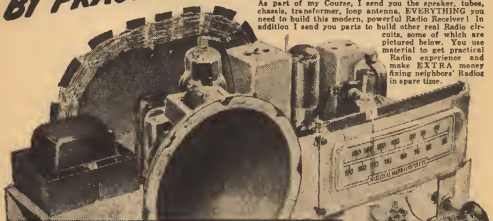
**THE CHEMICAL VAMPIRE** by LEO FLANNERY

...and other tales of weird science fiction

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## *All Stories Complete*

**THE CHEMICAL VAMPIRE** (Short—8,000) ..... by Lee Francis..... 8

Illustrated by Edmond Swietak

Chemists can tell us exactly what elements go into the make-up of the human—but dead—body

**THE STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE OF GUY SYLVESTER** ..... by Chester S. Gaier &  
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Guy Sylvester was a writer, and he believed in his characters. He seemed real to them, too . . .

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"I've got it," he said. "I've got the lost power!" And he proceeded to make use of it

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There were three thrones: on one an old Chinese; on another a pair of eyeballs; on the other . . .

**THE SWORDSMAN OF PIRA** (Novelette—30,000) ..... by Charles Racour..... 82

Illustrated by J. Allan St. John

He was a glorious warrior—his blade was magic; but he fought also with his head and heart

Cover painting by Edmond Swietak, illustrating a scene from "The Chemical Vampire"

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The

# OBSERVATORY

..... by the Editor

THIS issue might be called one of the most unusual we have put out. It's "aged in the wood," you might say! Some years ago we said we were saving some of our best stories for the future, and this year we decided to give our readers a Christmas present . . . and since our March issue comes out closest to Christmas, this is it! Merry Christmas.

FIRST on the list is "The Strange Disappearance Of Guy Sylvester" which was written, in its original draft, by Taylor Victor Shaver, brother of Richard S. Shaver, almost twenty years ago! Taylor Victor Shaver is dead now. He died quite a few years ago in a very mysterious manner—and maybe his story was prophetic. We'll leave it up to you.

NEXT we have Leroy Yerxa's "The Strange Tea Of Ting Sun Fu." Leroy died several years ago, and this is one of his best stories, which we've had in our files for nearly four years! We predict that you'll find that it hasn't deteriorated in our files—as a matter of fact, it seems to us to read even better than when we so enthusiastically bought it.

"THE Chemical Vampire" was written by Lee Francis, who our more astute readers will recognize as just a pen-name for Leroy Yerxa, which Leroy made more famous than even his real name! So here we have another yarn written quite a few years ago.

GUG ARCHETTE wrote "The Lost Power" about six years ago, and we've been saving it because we felt that someday an embarrassing hole might develop in an issue with several very long stories in it, and we might need such a short length. This issue that hole developed, and here is the story, and if it still appears clean-shaven after all these years, it's only because it's such a good story.

LASTLY we come to "The Swordsman Of Pira" by Charles Recour. Mr. Recour wrote this story at least two years ago, and even at that, it is the "baby" of our issue. But it isn't the "baby"

in length—it's the longest story in the issue, and one of the most exciting.

THREE of the writers (pardon us, two) are no longer with us, and it is with sincere regret that we realize that precious few of the works of these writers remain to be published. It is a monument to their ability that today, so long after, the stories are still of top quality, and even better!

THE popularity of Rog Phillips' "The Club House" has been growing by leaps and bounds until today it is (to quote our "fan" readers) the leading fan column in any science fiction magazine. We are pleased that our efforts in this respect have been so well received, and we will continue to present this entirely unedited feature just as you like it. Thanks for your many letters of commendation.

COMING next month is a rather unique story. It's called "The Monster" but it's rather the last word in modern "monster" stories. It was written around a fascinating cover painted by Arnold Kohn, and will certainly fool you if you try to guess just what kind of a monster it is! Don't try it—just pick up the next issue and read the story; and be surprised!

WE WANT to begin to predict an event of the future which hasn't yet been scheduled. It is Don Wilcox's greatest novel of all time—and that means 10 years of writing for AMAZING STORIES and *Fantastic Adventures*. When you read the great 2-part serial, "The Eye Of The World" you will find yourself unable to describe it adequately. Neither can we describe it! The reason it must appear in two parts is its tremendous length—82,000 words! Don't miss it—and watch for the announcement as to when it will appear. This is a treat we've been planning for a long time.

FOR you readers who like really top science fiction, take a tip and read the April issue of *Fantastic Adventures*, on sale February 20. It will have "War Of The Giant Apes," one of the best interplanetary stories of recent years. Don't say we didn't warn you. Rap



# THOUGHTS HAVE WINGS

*You Can Influence Others  
With Your Thinking!*

**TRY IT SOME TIME.** Concentrate intently upon another person seated in a room with you, without his noticing it. Observe him gradually become restless and finally turn and look in your direction. Simple—yet it is a positive demonstration that thought generates a mental energy which can be projected from your mind to the consciousness of another. Do you realize how much of your success and happiness in life depend upon your influencing others? Is it not important to you to have others understand your point of view—to be receptive to your proposals?

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# THE CHEMICAL VAMPIRE

By LEE FRANCIS'

**He tried to create life; but the body that came from his laboratory was dead . . . until night came!**

**I** CAN'T understand it, Mr. Grant. None of the workmen touched the coffin—we were only repairing the mausoleum as you instructed. And I know it wasn't open like this earlier this afternoon . . ."

The foreman stood uncertainly at the entrance to the mausoleum, his eyes

watching the frowning features of Jason Grant.

Grant was a short, plumpish man, with thin grayed hair and hard business eyes. Many had said they were as hard as the bricks that had made the Grant fortune. Now those eyes, which had guided the Grant Brickyards to



a lofty position in industry, were clouded. They stared at the foreman with concealed puzzlement.

"Why should anyone want to open the coffin of Marta Boronna?"

The foreman shook his head. "I wouldn't know about that, sir. Maybe you better take a look at it. There's something else that's mighty peculiar . . ."

Grant inclined his head. "I'll do just that. But what else is so unusual?"

The foreman turned away. "You'll see, sir."

Jason Grant shrugged and edged past the workman into the musty mausoleum. The air was dank, oppressive. It had about it a quality of stillness, of age. Unconsciously Grant found himself trying not to breathe too deeply. He had the queer sensation that he was drawing the vapors of eternity into his lungs.

He walked slowly across the broad granite floor. His eyes swept the sides of the massive tomb, caressed briefly each dusty coffin resting on its own hallowed niche. Each coffin with an inscription. Each inscription a member of his family for the past hundred years. His eyes by-passed the empty niches. There were no inscriptions on those—yet.

Finally he came to a coffin that lay slightly askew on its stone slab. His eyes narrowed as he saw the lid of the coffin raised and projected an inch or two off its previous sealed position. He read the inscription cut into the stone beside the casket: *Marta Boronna, born 1850, died 1880. May she rest easier in her tomb than they who put her here . . .*

Grant heard the foreman move up beside him. He watched as the man moved over to the coffin and raised the heavy lid.

"Here, sir, look . . ."

Grant stepped forward hesitantly. He did not like to look into the privacy of death. But he noted the insistence in the man's voice and peered over the edge of the casket.

His breath drew in sharply and for a moment he felt a strange wave of fear. Then the fear turned to startled amazement.

He was staring at the slender remains of a skeleton. The bones lay grey and somber, with a skull staring sightlessly up at him.

**B**UT it was not the skeleton of what had once been a slender young woman that brought a gasp to Jason Grant's lips. Nor was it the vacuous look of a lonely skull that brought a tremor to his face.

For his eyes were riveted on a narrow, wedge-shaped piece of wood, a stake, that stuck in a half-upright position between the ribs of the skeleton. A stake that at one time must have pierced through skin and flesh and bone into a beating, pulsing heart.

"Do you see what I mean, sir? That stake . . . What does it mean?"

Grant motioned quickly for the man to replace the lid of the casket. Then he turned his back, waiting.

The foreman came around him, holding the piece of wood in his hands.

"What shall I do with it, sir?"

Grant's eyes bulged as he saw the piece of wood.

"You fool! What did you remove that for?"

The man took a backward step at the anger in Grant's voice.

"Did I do something wrong? It didn't seem right that this should remain there . . ."

Grant forced himself to curb his anger. He knew suddenly that this man would not understand. And he also knew that he was not sure he under-

stood himself. As he stared at the stake in the foreman's hand his mind raced back over his family history. *May she rest easier in her tomb than they who put her here . . .*

Marta Boronna. Distant member of the Grant dynasty. Marta Boronna, who had been accused of witchcraft and vampirism by the narrow 19th century minds of Kenton, Massachusetts. Marta Boronna who had been attacked one solemn night by a masked mob. Attacked and killed. Killed and quietly buried.

It had only been in recent years that he had removed the casket from its dank grave and placed it beside other members of the family in the great mausoleum he had built thirty years before. He had felt pity at that time, for he had known of her tragic death, though the newspapers had not mentioned the incident at length. Nor had the savage killing of Marta Boronna received other notoriety. It had been hushed up, a thing to be spoken of only in whispers. Sure was the fate of the woman accused of being a vampire.

Now as he stared at the stake that had pierced the heart of the woman, he found that he no longer felt pity stir him. It was as if a strange fear took a grip on his soul. A thing he did not understand. A thing he wanted to ignore, forget.

He sighed finally and looked at the foreman.

"No matter. Throw the stake away. And forget about this. One of the men probably got curious and lifted the lid. The stake might be his idea of a practical joke. But certainly in bad taste."

The foreman pursed his lips thoughtfully.

"I can't see why any of the men would do a thing like that. . . . But if you don't want me to press the matter . . ."

"Drop it," Grant said decisively.

He followed the foreman out of the tomb and after a few instructions to the waiting workmen to complete the repairs on the roof of the mausoleum, he strode quickly away to the gates of the cemetery and his waiting automobile.

As he got behind the wheel of the car he shut the incident from his mind, remembering that he had planned on dropping over to his nephew's laboratory. There were things he had to say to Hal Grant.

He thought of them as he drove.

HAL GRANT turned from his work tables, topped with strange reagents, tubes with bubbling liquids, and weirdly constructed electrical apparatus.

The knock came again at the door of the laboratory.

Hal walked swiftly over to the door and opened it. He stared down from his six foot height at the impatient face of his uncle, Jason Grant.

"You took your time in answering," Jason Grant said irately.

Hal smiled. "Still the old bull dog." Then, apologetically, "I'm in a crucial stage of my experiments, I—"

"Experiments!" Jason Grant snorted the word out. "I don't mind telling you, Hal, I'm getting a little tired of all the expense your *experiments* are costing me! This last bill—a thousand dollars! For what!"

The younger man stroked his bearded jaw and shrugged.

"I needed the chemicals. They're expensive, I know, but—"

"Expensive! That's putting it mildly! And for what? In your own words, to reproduce the seventy-nine cents worth of chemicals in the human body! Hah! What I mean is—seventy-nine thousand *dollars!*"

A trace of anger touched Hal Grant's eyes.

"I don't think that's quite fair, Uncle Jason. If you couldn't afford it it would be a different matter. And you know how much this experiment means to me."

The anger left Jason Grant's face. In its place was a studied look of exasperation. He waved his hand around the laboratory.

"Afford it? There's a limit even to my generosity! All this tom-foolery to produce a human body from its chemical components! All this wasted money and effort to satisfy a childish theory and imagination fostered by science-fiction magazines! It's about time you grew up and took your place in the business world!"

Hal's cheeks colored. "Maybe I did read science-fiction magazines when I was younger. And maybe they were all imagination. But then, maybe the atom bomb was also imagination. And rocket flight, and radar, and—"

Jason Grant waved his hand. "We've been through all that before. I'll try and put some sense in your head another way. Just how long do you think Betty Starrett is going to tolerate all this? There's a limit to her patience, just as there is to mine. But she'll have to live with you—if she ever does marry you!"

"Betty understands the importance of my work," Hal said quietly.

"Does she? Then maybe I heard her wrong yesterday when she told me I should use my influence and have you stop meddling with all these fool chemicals!"

"I don't believe you," Hal's voice was sharp.

"Then ask her yourself. She knows as well as I do that it's all a waste of time and money. I—"

"I wouldn't be so quick about saying

that," Hal interrupted hotly. Then he paused and a note of eagerness entered his voice. "My experiment is in the final stage. This afternoon I produced a perfect female head—in that retort on the bench! The next and final step is only a matter of hours!"

Jason Grant took a deep breath. "Then you won't stop this nonsense. You're bound to continue making a fool of yourself?"

"Nothing could stop me now," Hal Grant said firmly. "And if it will be any relief to you, there won't be any more bills. As I said before, my work is nearly completed."

Jason Grant snorted. "You're damned right there won't be any more expense! But I'm not through with this discussion. We'll continue it later tonight. I'll be waiting in my study."

He turned on his heel then, and strode from the laboratory, slamming the door as he went.

THE afternoon hours dragged interminably onward. Long shadows started to creep from the open windows in the west wall of the laboratory as Hal Grant worked ceaselessly before a long cloth covered table. His fingers delicately added chemical after chemical to a long metal receptacle that lay on the table. With each addition he adjusted dials and switches on electrical apparatus connected to the metal vat.

Faint traces of smoke rose from the bubbling mixture as he watched and worked, and the hum of an electric governor grew louder as more current was generated and utilized.

Finally he straightened and took a small test tube from a rack. He stared hopefully at the bright blue liquid inside it. Then, his lips forming a grim line, he slowly tipped the test tube and emptied the contents in the vat.

There was a sizzling sound as the chemical struck the bubbling mixture in the vat, followed by a thick cloud of acrid smoke.

Hal Grant stepped back in sudden alarm from the violently reacting chemical mixture.

Then slowly the dense smoke began to fade, and he could see the vat again. He stared open-mouthed, his eyes not daring to believe what he saw.

He was looking at a body.

She lay in the now suddenly still vat, the bubbling liquids dissipated, the hum of the generators a barely audible sound. She lay, a perfectly formed body, from the pinkness of her small well-shaped toes, to the long, flaxen-like auburn hair.

Hal Grant stepped slowly forward, his feet numb on the floor of the laboratory, his hands trembling with awed excitement.

"I did it—I *did it*" his voice whispered hoarsely. And a look of wild triumph entered his eyes as his gaze swept over the still body in the vat.

Slowly his fingers reached down and touched one cheek. Soft flesh depressed under his touch. Flesh that was cold.

Some of the triumph died from his eyes at that. Her flesh was cold, cold as inanimate marble. Flesh that should have been warm. Flesh that should have been filled with the hot breath of life.

He adjusted the generators again. A loud hum grew into a roar of power. The vat shook with the force of the current surging through it. Then Hal Grant shut off the current and stepped to the vat again.

His fingers touched the cheek once more. And the flesh was as cold as before. As lifeless as it had been.

In swift movements he pushed the table to the far side of the laboratory. He pulled a fluoroscope screen down across the vat and turned the switch.

Then he peered into the screen.

Surprise shone in his eyes as he stared at perfectly formed bone structure. But that was all. Where there should have been the shadows of internal organs, there was nothing. Nothing but flesh and bone. Flesh and bone . . .

He stared for another long moment into the screen, then he shut it off and stepped back, an ironic laugh shattering the stillness of the room.

"I succeeded! I've made a body—a perfect human body! But a body without a heart, without a single vital organ! A body of flesh and bone—seventy-nine cents worth of chemical flesh and bone!"

He listened to his voice utter the words of irony. He listened to his own shattered hopes well out of him in a frustrated laughter.

He sat down in a chair and held his head in his hands, a great weariness sweeping over him . . .

BETTY STARRETT walked up the steps to the door of the laboratory. She paused a moment and surveyed herself. Her blonde hair was primly set, her make-up just right, and her summer dress new and snug fitting. She had spent quite a bit of time preparing for the evening, and she wanted Hal Grant to notice it.

She knocked at the door.

After a long silence she heard footsteps approach, and then the door opened.

She stared into the weary eyes of Hal Grant.

"—Oh, hello, Betty."

"Well, I must say, that's hardly the greeting I expected! Have you forgotten we have a date tonight?"

A bleak smile crossed Hal's face. "No, I haven't forgotten. Come in."

She frowned at his dispirited manner

and stepped into the laboratory. He shut the door behind her and motioned to a chair.

She moved over to it and sat down, watching him closely.

He paced up and down the floor, endlessly, and finally she asked:

"Hal, something's wrong. What is it?"

He turned to her, his face a mirror of dejection.

"My experiment, Betty. It—it's finished . . ."

A wave of relief flooded her features.

"Oh, Hal, I'm so glad to hear you say that! I was afraid to talk to you myself about it—did your uncle tell you?"

He nodded dully. "Yes, he did. But that's not exactly what I mean."

"It isn't? But you just said it was finished. Don't you plan to take your place in your uncle's business?"

He shook his head. "You don't understand. I said my experiment was finished—completed."

"Completed?" A frown wrinkled her eyes. "You mean you failed . . . I'm so sorry, Hal, honestly . . ."

He laughed then. A harsh, bitter laughter.

"Failed? Yes, I suppose you could call it that. You know what Uncle Jason was always saying about my producing seventy-nine cents worth of chemicals in the human body? Well, I've done that—and *only* that!"

"I, I don't understand you, Hal," the girl said puzzledly.

"Come over here," he said. "Look for yourself."

He walked to the far side of the room and stood beside the long table. He pushed the fluoroscope screen away and Betty Starrett walked slowly across the room and stared into the vat.

A sharp cry of astonishment broke from the girl's lips. She stepped back

from the vat in a startled movement.

"Hal! It's a body! A *body*!"

A faint smile pulled at his mouth. "There's nothing to be afraid of, Betty," he said. "But you're right, it is a body. And *only* a body!"

The girl looked at him with awed eyes. "You mean—you mean *you* created this . . ."

He nodded. "Yes, I created it. But I failed. For what you see is only flesh and bone. Flesh and bone incapable of life. There isn't a single internal organ. Nothing to promote or sustain life. I failed . . ."

THE girl stepped forward and took his arm gently. Her eyes were tender.

"But you didn't fail, Hal! You succeeded! You showed us you were right. Does your uncle know?"

He turned away from the vat and the body lying in it.

"No, not yet. And I must admit, the last laugh will be his. I've spent all these months to produce a perfect body, when I thought I could produce life along with it . . ."

The girl shook her head slowly, and there was a firmness in her voice as she spoke.

"You must forget about that, Hal. Men were not meant to delve into mysteries like that . . . life is God's business."

He shrugged. "I suppose I'm learning the hard way. I guess you and Uncle Jason were right all along."

Her eyes softened. "Let's forget about it for tonight, Hal. Let's walk out of here and just think about—us. . . . Do you still want to take in a movie in town?"

He looked at her and suddenly smiled. He could see the earnest look in her eyes. The earnestness that was trying to soften the miserable failure

he felt in his heart.

"Yes, Betty, I think that would be what I need right now. I'll be ready in a minute."

She watched as he took off the long white coat. She watched as he ran his fingers through his heavy hair, combing it back with his fingers. Then he put on his suit coat and she took his hand. She stared at the coat pockets, strangely bulky, and laughed.

"You still carry most of your laboratory with you! What dire chemicals are in your pockets tonight?"

He flushed and started to reach for his pockets. "I always forget . . ."

"Never mind," she told him. "You know movies always give me a headache. Maybe I'll need an aspirin—or something."

For the first time a genuine smile lit his features.

"I'm afraid these wouldn't accomplish the same purpose. They're part of my experiment."

She moved toward the door. "Well you wouldn't feel normal if you didn't have *some* bottles in your pockets, so we'll take them along!"

He laughed and followed her from the room, switching off the lights as he went.

A BRIGHT bulging moon shed a silvery light over the Kenton Cemetery. Its somber glow played softly through the trees and across the endless rows of tombstones, beating an iridescent path to the silent mausoleum.

Only the faint whisper of the night wind rustling the leaves of the trees stirred the silence. Then even the wind suddenly died away and there was nothing.

As if the wind's departure had been a signal, a sound suddenly broke the night air.

It was a grating sound. The sound

of stone being moved. A heavy wearisome sound. Startling and dread in the silence.

Then there was another sound. A low uttering wail of agony. A sound that crept from the bowels of space. A sound that was not of life.

The wind was still silent. It was as if it had run in fear of what was about to occur. As if it had had a warning.

A cloud drifted across the face of the moon, obscuring its light. And as the heavens themselves seemed to turn away in sudden fear, a strange rustling whisper drifted from the stone mausoleum.

And with the whisper came a strange vaporous shape, floating through the iron grating of the tomb's door. It was wispy, the fragmentary shape of a thing indescribable.

Again the low wail echoed hollowly through the night.

For a long moment the wraith-like shadow floated before the door of the tomb. Then, as if it were being carried by the silent wind, it moved.

Out across the tombstones. Through the shuddering limbs of the frightened trees. Across the wall of the cemetery.

It moved more swiftly now. Over fields, across roads, past houses where light streamed from friendly windows.

And finally it reached its destination. It hovered in the air over a brick building, studying it.

Then it slipped lower and hung searchingly beside an open window in the west wall.

It seemed to be peering into the room. It seemed to be studying the rows of benches with crucibles, retorts, and electrical apparatus.

And then it seemed to see a long table with a metal receptacle.

And again the low wail smote through the night.

Then there was silence and the

wraith floated through the window and over to the vat.

A body of flesh and bone lay cool and quiet, staring up at the wraith with sightless eyes.

A sound came again. But no longer a wail. It was now a sound of sighing content.

The wraith lowered itself into the vat.

. . . And shortly, the body moved.

IT WAS very late when Hal Grant turned his key in the lock of his uncle's home. As he moved into the hall and closed the door behind him he glanced at his wrist watch. It was well after three in the morning.

But strangely he did not feel tired. He felt buoyant, almost exuberant. Already the thought of his laboratory failure to produce life to the chemical body seemed nearly unimportant. Betty had done that.

He smiled to himself as he recalled the pleasant hours he had just spent with her. And the thought was even more pleasant, of the many years ahead that were waiting for them both. For he had asked her to marry him. And her eyes had lit up with a lover's light and she had fallen into his arms, whispering into his ear the things that lovers whisper.

And then he had left her at her home, the house her parents had left her when they died. It would soon be their house. He smiled at the thought. He would have his own home then. And Betty . . .

"Hal? Is that you?"

Hal's thoughts ended abruptly as he heard his uncle calling from the library. He frowned to himself as he heard Jason Grant's voice. Surely he hadn't sat up all night waiting for him to come home? Was he really going to continue the discussion of the afternoon?

"Hal! Come in here!"

There was an urgent note in Jason Grant's voice. Something that made Hal Grant hurry from the hallway and into the library.

Jason Grant was pacing nervously up and down the long luxurious rug of the library, his hands gripped tightly behind his back, his face a worried study as Hal looked at him.

"Is anything wrong?" Hal asked quickly.

Jason Grant stopped his nervous pacing and faced his nephew. Now Hal could see the older man's eyes. They were wide, almost fearful.

"That is putting it mildly," Jason Grant replied. "The town of Kenton has suddenly gone mad!"

Hal looked at him puzzledly. "What are you talking about?"

The older man's lips narrowed in a grimace. "In the past two hours a wave of killings have broken out! Four men are already dead—and all of them were employees of mine!"

A startled look crossed Hal's face. "Killings? Four men? . . . But who?—and why? . . ."

"That's just it! The police don't know! All of them were found near their homes—dead or dying—from loss of blood!"

"You mean they were stabbed?"

Jason Grant shook his head. "No, they weren't stabbed—at least not with a knife. Each man had teeth marks on his throat, where something had bitten them and drained the blood from their bodies . . ."

Hal looked at his uncle closely. "If this is your idea of a joke . . ."

"Joke!" Jason Grant gasped the word out. "I only wish it were! For what I'm thinking is so utterly fantastic that I'm frightened with the very thought! If I'm right, I'm the only person who knows the truth behind these deaths—and I may be on the list my-

self!"

Hal Grant stepped forward and steered his uncle to a chair. Then he pulled up another chair and sat down facing him.

"Now maybe you better tell me just what you mean," he said evenly.

THE older man looked at him and sighed. "The men who were killed were members of a crew I had repairing the family mausoleum. You probably remember the family history about Marta Boronna? . . ."

Hal nodded slowly. "Yes, but—"

"Well, *her* coffin was open this afternoon. And the foreman removed a *stake* that had been driven into her heart—the treatment superstition says will end a vampire's existence . . ."

Hal's eyes looked shocked. "You're not trying to tell me you believe that a vampire—"

"That's exactly what I'm trying to tell you! Go ahead, call me insane! But then tell me how else these men died! And besides, there's proof . . ."

"What proof?"

"One of the men, the foreman, gasped out the fact that he had been attacked by a woman. A naked woman! A woman with long auburn hair—a woman whose flesh was cold when she touched him—when her teeth sank into his throat!"

Hal Grant sat unmoving in his chair. His breath had caught in his throat, and something tightened around his heart. *A naked woman!—whose flesh was cold . . . with long auburn hair . . .*

"My God!—It's impossible! . . ." The words gasped from Hal Grant's lips.

"I know it's impossible! And how can I tell the police?"

Hal looked back at his uncle. The dread feeling was great in him now as he spoke.

"I didn't mean about your vampire theory—I meant that the woman you just described is my own creation!"

"*Your what?*"

Hal blurted out in short, nervous sentences, the events of the afternoon. He watched his uncle's eyes expand in astonishment as he told of the partial success of his experiment. Finally:

"—but she wasn't alive! She couldn't have been alive! I would have known it!"

Jason Grant was on his feet. "Well there's only way to find out about this! If you're lying to me . . ."

"Why should I lie? I tell you I created a synthetic woman!"

"Very well, we'll see. We're going to your laboratory right now!"

Hal Grant nodded, and followed his uncle across the library floor.

HAL fitted his key into the lock and opened the door of the laboratory. He stepped inside and switched on the lights.

Behind him, Jason Grant walked into the room, his eyes searching.

"It's over there," Hal said, pointing to the far side of the room where the long table stood with the metal vat on it.

He lead the way over to it, and stopped a few feet from it, a hoarse cry leaving his lips.

"It's gone! The body's not here!"

Jason Grant edged around his nephew and stood staring at the empty vat. When he turned to his nephew his eyes were grim.

"You mean there was a body—a woman's body that you created—in this vat when you left here this evening?"

Hal nodded, the dread closing around him in a wave now.

"That's exactly what I mean! Betty was here—she saw it! But it was dead



—I know it was dead!”

“Dead bodies don’t get up and walk away,” Jason Grant said.

A horrified look entered Hal’s eyes. “Then the only other answer is that she wasn’t dead . . . I must have been wrong—there must have been life in her, life that fanned itself after we had left. Good heavens! Do you realize what I’ve done?”

Jason Grant looked from the empty vat back to his nephew.

“I realize that we’ve got to tell the police about this! Before anything else happens—”

His voice broke off as the telephone on Hal Grant’s desk began to ring.

The two men looked at each other for a long moment. There was something in both their eyes, a shadow of fear, a dread of the unknown. Finally Hal tore his gaze away and strode over to the phone. He picked up the receiver.

“Hello?”

“ . . . Hal . . . ”

The sound of Betty Starrett’s voice came across the wire, and the tension left Hal’s body.

He turned to his uncle. “It’s Betty.”

Then he spoke into the phone. “Yes, Betty? I thought you’d be asleep.”

“ . . . Hal . . . ”

His name again. And this time he noticed that there was a strange sound to the girl’s voice. A hesitancy about it, a tiredness, a—

“Betty! Is anything wrong?” Anxiety was in his voice.

“ . . . Feel so strange . . . Hal . . . She was here . . . Attacked me . . . throat . . . feel strange . . . dizzy . . . ”

Terror closed over Hal Grant. “*She?* Who, Betty? Who attacked you?”

“ . . . Marta . . . your Marta . . . body you made . . . throat hurts . . . ”

Behind Hal, he could hear Jason Grant swearing as he shouted into the phone.

“Don’t do anything, Betty! We’re coming right over! We’ll—”

His voice broke off as he heard a strange sound over the phone. It was barely audible, a weird sort of wail, but it sent a quiver of dread up Hal Grant’s spine.

And then he heard the girl’s voice again. Only now she wasn’t talking into the phone. Her voice seemed far away, and grew more distant as she spoke.

“ . . . I am coming . . . Marta . . . I know . . . dawn is close . . . ”

“Betty! Betty!” Hal shouted the words with a sob in his voice. But the line went dead. A click as the receiver was replaced on the other end.

Hal Grant looked stupidly at the phone in his hand for a single moment. Then he turned to his uncle.

“Betty’s been attacked! The creature is over there now!”

Then he was dashing to the door, and Jason Grant ran close at his heels.

**H**AL shot the car into the driveway of Betty Starrett’s home and pulled up sharply behind her parked coupe.

“Her car is here!” he exclaimed to Jason Grant.

The older man nodded as they piled out onto the driveway. “Pray God that we’re not too late!”

Then they were running the remaining short distance to the house. They could see that the lights were on in the living room on the ground floor, and as they ran up the steps, they could see that the front door was open.

Hal dashed into the house, shouting.

“Betty! Betty!”

He stopped short in the front hall, Jason Grant panting close at his back. They stood then, listening, the sounds of their labored breathing breaking the silence. But that was all. No other

sound. Nothing.

Hal ran into the living room. The lamps were lit, but the room was empty. He ran back into the hall, shouting again.

"Betty!"

His voice echoed into silence. He shot a frightened glance at his uncle. Then he ran up the stairs to the second floor. In moments he had looked into each room, and always the result was the same. Finally he came downstairs again, as Jason Grant walked in from the rear of the first floor.

"She's not down here, Hal!"

"And she's not upstairs—she must have left the house!"

Jason Grant grabbed his arm. "Think man, when she spoke to you on the phone—did she say anything besides being attacked . . ."

Hal nodded dully. "She mentioned a name. Marta. But my creation didn't have—"

His voice broke off as a stunning realization hit him. He stared wildly at his uncle, and saw the same look of incredulous fear in the older man's eyes.

"Marta?" Jason Grant whispered the name. "Remember what I was telling you—remember Marta Boronna! Good Lord—"

Hal shook his head wildly. "But that's impossible! She said it was the body I created in my laboratory!"

"But she called it Marta!" Jason Grant shot back. "Why, man? Why unless—"

"I remember now!" Hal broke in tensely. "She was talking to someone else just before the line went dead! She said something about dawn approaching and she was coming—she mentioned the name Marta again! . . ."

Silence fell between the two men then. And their eyes locked in a look of disbelief. A look that gradually changed to one of horror.

It was Jason Grant who finally broke the silence. And when he spoke it was as if he were speaking to himself, his voice coming in a monotone of jerky thoughts.

"The dawn . . . of course! Marta Boronna was released—she found the body in your laboratory—she must return to her tomb before the sun—"

His voice ended abruptly. His eyes stared fixedly into Hal's.

"And Betty's gone!" the words ripped from Hal Grant's lips.

"We've got to hurry!" Jason Grant exclaimed. "She didn't take her car—we may still get there ahead of them!"

And with a sense of dread, Hal knew what his uncle meant. There was a tomb. A mausoleum in the Kenton cemetery. And in the mausoleum a coffin . . .

The two men left the house, running for the waiting automobile.

THEIR feet moved in rustling sounds across the damp grass of the cemetery. They moved side by side, their bodies touching, their eyes alert, tense and watchful.

The moon was setting in the distant sky. Its light a faint silvery path of iridescence.

Tombstones rose gaunt and naked in the dissipating night around them. And a soft wind, heralding the approaching dawn, whispered mockingly through the trees.

And then they both saw it ahead of them. Hal Grant fixed his eyes on it, and felt a tightness in his throat.

The mausoleum. Ghostly stone rearing its head through the shadows. A squat structure of death and foreboding.

Beside him, he heard Jason Grant whisper, "Look! The door is closed—we're here in time!"

They advanced upon the shrouded tomb and Jason Grant stepped up to

the grilled metal door. He pulled a key from his pocket and inserted it in the lock of the tomb. There was a rasping sound as the door opened then.

They stood on the threshold for a moment, staring into the musty interior of the mausoleum. And as they stared, Hal's eyes fastened on a wedge-shaped piece of wood lying on the floor just inside the door. Jason Grant stepped around him and picked up the stake. Then he walked into the mausoleum and Hal followed him.

They stood finally before the coffin of Marta Boronna. They looked through the murky shadows, breathing in the damp, musty air. Only the sound of their breathing broke the stillness now. And each breath they took had an odd weirdness about it.

Hal stared at the open coffin. Stared at the crookedly placed lid, hanging on an angle over the casket. A chill gripped him then. And he heard his uncle's voice beside him. Heard again the low monotone of sound from Jason Grant's lips.

"You may have a new body, Marta Boronna, but I'll drive this stake into your heart—and this time when you die, I'll do what should have been done decades ago . . ."

As Jason Grant's words trailed off, Hal stared at him. He looked at the stake in his uncle's trembling fingers. And then suddenly he remembered.

"The body, Uncle Jason—you can't kill it with a stake—"

Jason Grant turned to him in the murky light of the tomb. His voice came grimly. "This may seem like witch craft, Hal. But I know the truth—even if you refuse to believe it. The only thing that will end the life of this vampire is a stake through the heart . . ."

"But that's what I mean," Hal's voice whispered insistently. "The body I created has no *heart*! It's only flesh and bone—it's—"

Hal's voice died away as a sound crept through the greying night outside the tomb. He gripped his uncle's arm in warning and they turned to face the door of the mausoleum.

Outside they saw a vague shadow move. Then they both moved silently into a corner of the chamber, their eyes fixed in weird fascination on the open door.

A gust of wind eddied through the opening, swirling dry, scuttling leaves before it. And then the shadow loomed larger. It blocked the open door, a silhouette of greyness. And then it moved into the tomb, and a sharp cry locked itself in Hal Grant's throat.

It was Betty Starrett.

HAL'S eyes stared at her in a grim fascination. The girl was clad in a thin housecoat. Underneath it he could see she was wearing pajamas. Her feet were moving slowly forward into the tomb, scraping across the stone floor, her slippers making a scuffling slide of sound.

Beside him, Hal felt the tight fingers of Jason Grant close around his arm as he started to rise. He tensed then, in his crouched position, watching, his breath a barely audible sound.

"We are here . . . Marta . . . you must hurry . . . the dawn . . ."

Hal heard the dull words leave the girl's lips. She spoke as if she were in a trance. And her feet moved toward the coffin of Marta Boronna as if guided by some unseen hands.

Then the girl stopped. She stood in the murky light a few feet away from them, her back to them, swaying uncertainly on her feet.

In the sudden complete silence Hal felt the cry locked in his throat starting to slip out. He wanted to rush to his feet, gather the girl in his arms, shake the evil power that was holding

her from her body.

But he didn't move. He crouched in the grey light of the tomb, feeling the fingers of his uncle tighten again on his arm.

And then there was another sound. A sound that brought a chill of fear to Hal Grant's soul. It was the same sound he had heard on the telephone when he had talked to Betty. It was a wail, a low, moaning sound that rose on the early morning wind.

He felt Jason Grant tremble beside him in sudden tension. And then, as he looked back to the door of the tomb, Hal saw another shadow moving through the grey light.

Once again there was a rustle of swirling leaves in the tomb entrance. And then the shadow loomed into the opening, and stood there.

Hal's eyes bulged in amazement as he saw the shadowed contours of the body he had created in his laboratory that very day. He saw the long flowing hair falling down over bared shoulders. And the sound came again.

From the lips of the synthetic body it came. A weird wail of eerie tones.

And then the body moved into the tomb, advanced slowly upon the swaying figure of Betty Starrett. Advanced with upraised arms.

"We are in time, Betty Starrett. But we must hurry. Have no fears. You will feel no pain. Your life will ebb and you will be free. Your body will then be mine . . ."

Beside Hal, Jason Grant rose to his feet with a hoarse cry. He stepped forward, the stake raised over his head.

"Stop! You fiend—I'll send you back to the hell you came from!"

The words were a sharp cry, and then Hal was on his feet, tensing his body for a lunge forward.

The creature turned in shocked surprise. And as the two men took their

first steps toward it, a harsh laughter broke through the tomb, echoing hollowly.

One arm pointed toward Jason Grant and the older man stopped in his tracks, the stake still held grotesquely over his head. Hal took one more step forward, and then felt a pair of glowing eyes fasten on his.

He stared into the face of the body he had made, into a pair of eyes that seemed to swell and envelop him. He tried to tear his gaze away, but couldn't. And as he stared, a numbness seemed to creep through him, and his feet refused to move across the floor. His arms dropped to his sides like leaden weights, and he stood swaying on his feet, suddenly incapable of movement.

The laughter came again.

"Fools! So you know my secret! You who made this body I now possess! Well, it will avail you little! You will die like the others . . . but not before I possess the body of this girl!"

Her eyes burned into Hal's. "It is unfortunate that you could not have created a living body for me. And you," she turned her burning gaze at Jason Grant, "are fool enough to think your stake can end my life? Do you not know the body I possess has no heart?" the laughter came again, a triumphant sound that echoed in Hal Grant's ears. "There is nothing that can destroy me now! The world will learn of me—I have a score to settle with all mortal beings! I was killed as a vampire many years ago—but now I am free! Watch closely before you both die!"

THE creature turned from them then and advanced once more upon the swaying figure of the girl.

Hal Grant's eyes followed the slow deliberate movements as the body moved closer to the girl, as the arms of

the creature upraised, and the lips opened and white teeth flashed in the grey light.

He fought then. His mind roared with the force of his will. He must break the trance that held him. *He must break it!*

Time stood still then. And the thought pulsed through him, set his blood throbbing in his temples. And slowly his hand moved. Slowly, and then faster. It closed around a bottle in his coat pocket, and then it withdrew. Sweat stood out in cold beads on his brow as he forced his other hand to move.

Then his fingers closed around a glass stopper in the bottle. There was a grating sound as the stopper came away and fell with a clatter of sound to the stone floor.

The creature turned abruptly as its arms reached out to enfold the girl's swaying body. Its glowing eyes fastened on Hal Grant's fingers, swept up in startled fear to his face.

Hal felt those glowing orbs fasten on his. He knew that in a moment he would be engulfed by the terrible power of those eyes.

With every facet of his mind he willed his hands to move. Upward, out. Upward, out.

Slowly they moved. And as they moved, the creature let a cry of fear slip from its lips. The eyes burned a hypnotic force at Hal Grant.

But they were too late.

Hal's hands shot outward suddenly, and a spray of liquid left the bottle.

It engulfed the synthetic body and there was a sudden hissing sound. A cry of agony left the creature's lips and it staggered backward. Then the hissing grew in volume and wisps of smoke puffed from the flesh under the reacting liquid.

The smoke grew denser, obscuring

the body, and tiny licking flame tongues leaped through the grey light of the tomb.

Then the hissing faded away and the smoke vanished.

Hal Grant stared at a small wavering mass of ash in the air before him. Then even that dissipated. Until there was nothing.

Nothing but a distant wail. A tortured sound of a lost soul. An agony of sound that receded into the abyss of eternity.

And silence.

A hoarse sob brought Hal Grant to his senses. He wheeled, seeing the figure of Betty Starrett collapsing to the floor. He reached out with his arms and caught the girl's falling body. Then he held her close to him.

"It's all over, Betty. You're all right now. It's all over . . ."

Beside him, he saw Jason Grant wiping his brow with his hand. There was a dull look in the man's eyes, a look of disbelief.

The girl stirred in Hal's arms.

"I knew what was going on—oh, Hal, it was terrible! I couldn't control my body . . ."

"I know," he said gently. "But it's all over. You're safe. She's destroyed forever."

Jason Grant's voice came hoarsely. "But how . . ."

Hal smiled grimly. "I dissolved her. I carried a chemical reacting agent in my pocket . . . an old habit of mine . . ."

The girl stirred in his arms, her eyes tearful. "It was horrible, that creature . . ."

Hal nodded and tightened his grip around her. "I know, Betty, but I've learned that you can't dabble with science—like I did. Man wasn't meant to learn such things . . ."

"Then you won't experiment again? You'll join your uncle, and you and I

will—"

"If Uncle Jason still wants me, yes. I promise you."

And beside them, Jason Grant sighed, relief and sudden content in his eyes as he smiled down at them.

THE END

# THE AMAZING AMAZON

By  
FRANCES YERXA

**T**HE gigantic Amazon River in South America acquires its name from the fact that an early explorer fought pitched battles with Indian tribesmen whose wives fought as well as they. Consequently he named the river, "the River of Amazon."

The Amazon River threads through one of the most mysterious areas left on this planet. Hundreds of thousands of square miles of territory are touched by this gigantic river. White men have penetrated into the jungle and made nothing of it. There is a plan afoot in Brazil now, to start to open up the country surrounding the river by means of systematic exploration and development. Let us hope that this organization has more success than others in the past have had. Everyone remembers the abortive attempts of the rubber and oil companies, to open up the country to exploitation. All that remains of their efforts are the crumbling ruins of buildings gradually being overshadowed by jungle vegetation.

The land surrounding the Amazon is extremely rich in almost every resource but coal. Many companies have tried to extract this natural wealth, but the difficulty of working and transporting things in the fecund jungle has stopped most efforts in their tracks.

One of the most interesting tries of that kind was made by a small party of scientifically equipped and trained workers numbering two hundred and seventy-five persons, including scientists and doctors. The purpose of the expedition was to establish a tin mining organization. After penetrating into the jungle and locating the buried deposits of tin ore, what amounted practically to a miniature city, was built. It was called San Chaho. At first everything went well. Jungle area was cleared, a small refinery was set up and the mines began to produce tin. Native labor existed in abundance and was comparatively easily requisitioned for the work.

For three months everything progressed nicely. Then it was discovered that during the course of one night, three white men had disappeared. During the next ten weeks four other white men disappeared—completely vanished from sight with no indication of their whereabouts.

Then too, Indian laborers became impossible to

obtain. They began to drift away from the project on one pretext or the other and no inducements were great enough to make them stay.

A small exploring party determined to seek out the cause of the gradual dissolution of the camp, stumbled by sheer accident on a jungle clearing about twenty miles from the camp. Here was built a huge stone temple; judging from its delapidated condition it had been built many centuries ago by what must certainly have been a relatively civilized peoples for the stone work was of a high order of skill.

The horribly mutilated bodies of the white men who had disappeared from the camp were found here. They were staked to crevices in the supporting stone walls of the temple by wooden rods driven through their bodies. The whole grisly scene had the air of a sacrificial event.

But there was no sign of the tribes who had done these things.

Several Indians when closely questioned spoke of the gods punishing the white men, but when the scientists attempted to find out in more detail just what gods had been responsible for this, the Indians clammed up completely and would give no further information.

While the white men managed to keep the camp operating at a very low level it was soon realized that the project was foreordained to failure. Labor became impossible to get and a few more white men disappeared to be found later in the same position as their comrades—staked against the temple walls. Morale sank so low that the camp was broken up.

Later investigators discovered that actually there was an Indian society, the "Xanphene," the equivalent of the leopard societies of Africa, whose function was to guard the purity of the jungle.

While this is an isolated case, and the real reason that most acquisitive jungle expeditions broke down was because of the sheer voracity of a fecund jungle, efforts have not been lessened. In the not distant future we may see a time when the land surrounding the Amazon will be thrown open to civilization, but it will be considerably more moderate than the high powered oil-engine civilizations that white men usually like to establish.



**Sylvester believed his own stories;  
and his characters seemed very real. Then  
one day he lost control of his plotting . . .**

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** We offer here a strange document. Is it the last queer story from the pen of Guy Sylvester? Or is it what it purports to be—his own account of his disappearance?

Guy Sylvester was last seen at nine o'clock on the evening of October second. This manuscript, in his own peculiar system of shorthand, was found on the desk in his studio on the morning

of October third.

The few facts known about the case have been broadcast to the world by press and radio. As most of you will remember, the studio door was locked on the inside. There was no other possible exit or entrance. The few pieces of furniture in the studio were disarranged; a sword was gone from the wall; the books, usually on the desk,





# The Strange Disappearance of GUY SYLVESTER

by Chester S. Geier & Taylor Victor Shaver

were on the floor.

On the desk lay this manuscript, Sylvester's pen and a set of false teeth, both upper and lower plates. These teeth could not have been Sylvester's, for it is well known that he was inordinately proud of his own natural ones.

This manuscript, transcribed by Sylvester's wife, has not been edited by us. Because of this manuscript, the police believe Sylvester's disappearance to be a hoax, and his wife believes him to be a victim of amnesia or insanity. For these reasons, it has never before been published.

Be that as it may, it is offered here for its literary value only. If Sylvester meant it as a short story, in our opinion it is the best one he ever penned. However, if it is a true accounting of his strange disappearance, it is a document that the scientists of our world should scan with eager eyes.

It begins abruptly.

\* \* \*

I WRITE in desperate haste. I feel that I am living the last moments of my life. I am to be hung. I have been tried and convicted by a jury



of my own creation.

Whoever reads this, forgive me my incoherency. I am distraught. My mind is whirling end over end. The events of the past hour have overpowered my intellect. I have written many strange stories that were purely imaginary. Tonight I have lived—I am still living—through experiences more strange than any I have ever imagined. My brain seems paralyzed. If the things I am going to record here had not happened, I could not tell of them.

I am trying to write coherently, to begin at the beginning. At this moment, I am satisfied of my own sanity. I am just overwhelmed. Even as I inscribe this, my self-appointed judge and jurors sit around my fireplace drinking wine which they think I provided. And I did create that wine as surely as I created each and every one of them. I am a father tried and convicted by his own children. Was ever man in more terrible predicament than I?

But my allotted moments slip by—they gave me only until they consume the cask of wine.

At nine o'clock this evening I kissed my wife goodnight and came into my studio, locking the door behind me. There is no other way into this room. There is no telephone. The walls are soundproof. It is built so that when I enter here, I cannot be disturbed. And yet, tonight at least, fourteen different personalities have entered this room without unlocking the door.

But I go too fast, I must tell events in sequence; I have so much to say.

**B**RIEFLY, the setting: My house is on top of a hill, overlooking the sea. That wall of my study which faces the sea is of glass. I had it built that way, so that I might sit behind my desk and gaze out over the water.

The study itself is a huge room that

I hoped would encourage great thoughts, but since I came here to write, my work has lost much of its fire. I found it easier to write in the attic, where—but I dare not write of myself. There is not time.

This room is almost barren of furniture. I do not encourage visitors. My desk sets in the very middle of the floor. In the wall at my back is the fireplace about which my persecutors, my executioners, now sit. The wall in front of me is the huge window looking out on the sea. The floor is highly polished, a few rugs and skins thrown about. The ceiling is beamed. The panelled walls are adorned with crossed swords of every description. But enough of the setting.

After I had locked myself in, I sat down at my desk to start a ten thousand word story. But I did not even have a worthwhile idea.

Lately, my imagination seems to have atrophied. I can no longer create characters with ease and facility. I am afraid I have gone stale. I have been worried about this. I have many contracts that must be filled. Yes, this is all part of tonight's happenings. I must show you the mental state I am in, that I have been in for a long time. Whoever reads this must have all the facts. Perhaps I am insane. I must confess that I have thought at times, recently, that my mind might crack under the strain of constant writing, new plots, new characters, and all the other details that are supposed to make a writer's life so exciting.

I strode up and down the room. I sat, running my hands through my hair. I had tentatively decided that the main character of my story should be an inventor with some fantastic invention. But I could not visualize either him or his invention; nor could I formulate a plot of any sort.

During periods of creative work, I am not conscious of the passage of time. I keep no clock in my studio. I am oblivious to my surroundings. But tonight I was unable to attain this stage of concentration. I was aware of each detail in my immediate environment: the desk in the center of the room, its top flooded with light from the lamp; the crackling log fire; the huge yellow moon—now obscured by clouds—hanging in the sky, its beams painting a golden pathway across the sea and filling the room with soft light.

An ideal setting for artistic effort, but I could not get a word on paper.

Finally, after a period of restless pacing, my footsteps echoing unpleasantly, I flung myself into the chair behind my desk and buried my head in my arms. I do not know how long I stayed thus.

**S**UDDENLY, I was aware of a strange noise: "Glug, glug, glug, glug." It was like a voice struggling through a strangled throat. "Glug, glug, glug, glug."

I sat bolt upright in my chair. I well knew that no one could be in the room. Yet, there by the side of my desk, stood a little man with the most curiously turned-in eyes that stared into each other across the low bridge of a pugged nose. His lips were stretched back over hideously large teeth. His clothes seemed to be three sizes too large for him. His pants legs were rolled up, exposing shoeless feet clad in socks extending at least three inches beyond his toes.

It wasn't as if he had put on clothes that were too large for him. It was as if he had shrivelled up inside of clothes that, when they were put on, had fit him perfectly.

In his hands, clutched to his breast, he held a small object about the size and shape of a cigar box.

It seemed that he had been running. At least, he was breathing heavily through his snarling lips and trying to talk at the same time. That accounted for the strange 'glugging' noise.

Then I saw that his lips weren't snarling, but had, seemingly, shrunk back over teeth that were much too large for his mouth. It was as if all his face had shrivelled, but not his teeth. "Were they his own teeth?" I thought. "Or had some one gagged him by cramming a too large set of false teeth in his mouth?"

He just stood and looked at me and panted and 'glugged.'

Finally, I said, "My dear man! What do you mean, breaking in on me like this?" Foolish, perhaps, but I could think of nothing else.

"Glug! Glug! Glug!" he answered me.

Suddenly, he stepped forward and laid the box on the desk. Then, with both hands, he reached to his mouth and with a tug jerked out a large set of false teeth. Both upper and lower plates. These he placed on the desk beside the box where they are now, gleaming at me as I write.

I gasped in astonishment; in horrified amazement.

"Quick! They're after me!" he cried, in a voice that seemed as shrunken as his body. It was as if it had shrivelled from a base to a tenor. "They'll get me! But my secret must not die with me!"

"What do you mean?" I fairly gasped. "How did you get here? Who's after you? What secret?"

Even as these questions tumbled out, a thought ran through my mind: "This must be a dream. I must be asleep. This is the inventor I was going to write a story about." But I knew this could not be.

"What difference does it make?" the little man with the turned-in eyes

snapped. "I came in here riding on a moonbeam. And that's the way they'll come after me!"

"What?" I shouted. "You're mad. Or I am."

"LISTEN to me," shrieked the little man. "Neither of us is mad. But we are both very close to death. I am literally half dead now." He began to roll back the sleeves of his coat as if to emphasize his shrunken stature. "Are we alone here? Can we talk in secrecy?"

"We will not be disturbed," I answered, "unless someone else rides in on a moonbeam." How I wish now that someone had been with me!

"Don't interrupt me then," the little man began. "I must tell you the essential points first, so if they should get here before I'm through—" He waved his hand as if to wipe out the thought.

"They are trying to steal my secret," he continued. "My secret which is incorporated in that little box. They had me once tonight. They started to disintegrate me. Don't look so incredulous. Once tonight, this suit I'm wearing was tight on me; those teeth were loose in my mouth. I had shoes, but I ran out of them."

"My God man!" I exclaimed. "That's absurd! Absurd!" Yet, somehow, I felt the little man was speaking the truth. Those teeth made me believe him.

What should I do? Here was a situation that neither I, nor any of my fiction characters, had ever been forced to face. In my wildest flights of imagination I had never conceived anything like this.

"Don't interrupt me!" barked the shrunken man, trying to center his turned-in eyes on me. Then he continued: "Yes. They shrunk me down to this size and left me for a while,

thinking that I would divulge my great secret to them in exchange for my natural size. But I escaped. They'll soon catch up to me though, and then I'll disappear. Oh, yes I will. You'll see.

"They won't come in person. But even now they're out there, sliding along the moonbeams looking for me. Their electrical eyes are searching through the dark for me. Their electrical noses are following my trail. And when they catch up to me, I'll vanish before your very eyes."

He shuddered, then continued with his strange, wild tale. I would not have interrupted, even if I could. That toothless mouth was telling a stranger tale than any I had ever heard or penned. I revel in this opportunity to set it down, even though it has cost me my life. If I can only finish it, and recount the other strange happenings of this night, before my executioners grow restless of waiting for their sport. My joy in writing this has overcome my fear of death.

"I must divulge to you my secret; give you the benefit of my life's work."

I WOULD have remonstrated with him. But, imperiously, he motioned me to silence. His personality was dominant. I wondered if it had shrivelled in proportion with his body.

"Before I place in your hands the unlimited power my secret will give you, I want you to swear that you will not use it to any person's detriment; nor for your own aggrandizement. That you will use it only for the betterment of mankind. Do you swear?"

To placate him, I swore by all the things that both he or I held holy.

Satisfied, he rushed on: "My secret is so great that I myself am afraid of it. I am afraid to use it to save myself. I am afraid it would run away with me. Besides, I have sold my soul to these

beings who are after me. And they also want my soul's work. But they shall not have it!

"But you are clean. You have not bargained with them. So to you I give my secret. It is so simple."

The little man's imperiousness, his earnestness, his sincerity, had carried off any doubts I had of him. He came up closely to me and said:

"In three words, my secret is this: **THOUGHTS ARE THINGS.** Philosophers' words, say you; and so said I, until one day those three words took hold of me. Thoughts are really things, aren't they? Things must be thoughts before they really are: isn't that so? The universe itself must have been someone's thought before it was. One thinks a thing. Then one creates it. And then it is. Right?"

I did not interrupt. I had decided he was mad.

"My idea was simply to eliminate the physical process of creation; or rather to build a machine that would do the work of creation by a process that might be termed 'thought crystallization'.

"That box is the machine I've invented. All one needs do is throw that little switch in the lid and think something—and then that thing is.

"I know my machine will work. But I have been afraid to try it myself. I'm afraid I'm not big enough to control it."

Suddenly the little man stopped talking. His body stiffened. "They've got me!" he gasped. "They've found me! They've turned their rays on me! They've—"

He was silent, as if frozen into silence.

Then, a most fearful thing happened before my very eyes, while I sat paralyzed, completely unable to move, unable to help. The little man's eyes be-

gan to turn further inward; his nose shrunk inward and his lips sucked inward around his toothless gums. Slowly, his face disintegrated into black nothingness. His face became just a black hole in his skull.

Then, the skull caved in around the hole. Slowly the head disappeared within the collar of the shirt. And slowly the suit of clothes sank to the floor as the body disintegrated.

Oh, believe me whoever reads this, if anyone ever does. I am not exaggerating, I am not fabricating. I am setting what I actually saw happen. Believe me, please.

**T**HE little man's suit of clothes was finally still. I knew that he was gone; that I would never see him again. I sat horror stricken in my chair. Suddenly, with a 'wooshing' sound, the suit of clothes disappeared from the floor. It was as if someone, in anger, had turned on the full power of the disintegrating ray and snatched that harmless suit of clothing into nothingness.

Just then a cloud passed over the moon, obscuring it from view.

I leaned forward in my chair, when I had somewhat recovered my composure, and examined the floor where the little man had stood. There was not so much as a scratch on the floor where the clothing had lain, not so much as a grease spot.

I sat back in my chair. I could not think. The horror of it! Who were the sinister beings who engineered the disintegrating rays? Was it all a dream? Was I insane? Am I insane? Am I writing this? Or is this, too, the imaginings of an overtaxed brain? There is no way I can tell. I must write on. You, whoever read this, must judge me. Know that I did all the routine things to judge myself. I pinched myself. I slapped my face. I got up and walked

around. I am certain this is not a dream. I reacted normally to taps under either knee cap. I do not think I am insane.

To further prove to me that the little man had actually been in the room and that this terrible thing had actually happened, there were his false teeth on my desk. And the little box.

What should I have done? What would you have done?

I picked up my pen and poked at the teeth with it. They seemed to grin happily at me. Or was it wickedly? I picked up the box and examined it. A solid piece of some strange wood, there was no lid or opening to it. Just the little switch on one side. What ever was inside was sealed against examination.

The words of the little man were etched vividly on my brain: "Thoughts are things," he had said. "Thoughts are things."

What a mind-filling phrase! I cogitated on it. I let it wander back and forth across my brain. It seemed to grow and grow until it filled every cranny of my intellect.

"THOUGHTS are things!" And in my hands I held the machine that could prove this. To think and to create with the very thought. How fearful! How awesome! How wonderful! How Godlike!

The idea frightened me. And yet—yet I knew from the very first that I was going to try it out. Only the memory of what I had promised the little man stood in my way. I dared not use the power in the little box selfishly. Only for the good of all humanity. I had sworn. I could see what the little man had meant. The power he had given me was too great to waste on personal needs.

The little man had said he had never

tried it out. Suddenly, remembering this, I doubted. Perhaps the box wouldn't work. A hoax. A joke. But I could not believe that.

I had to try it out. But how? What should I think of first? What did all humanity need? A panacea for all mankind's ills? But who was I to say that a cure-all would be good for humanity? Who was I to judge what humanity needed?

The more I thought of something that would do the world good, the more afraid I became of that box. "Suppose," I thought, "while I have the switch open thinking of some good thing, my brain, through some vagary of thought, conceived some fearful thing, some terrible thing of destruction, some pestilence, some monster."

I have a queer brain whose thoughts at best are hard to control. This has been my fortune. I fear now that it has destroyed me.

No. The power contained in that box was too great for one individual to exercise. I decided I would call together an august group of men, the thinkers of the world, and place the box and its problem in their hands. Let them conceive something for it to create.

But then I realized that before I did that, it had to be tried out. I must prove that it would work. I must make it create something to prove that it would work. But what?

"Suppose," I thought, "I set it to write my story for me. No, that would be selfish." Several times I wanted to give up the problem until my mind grew more clear. But the idea so fascinated me, I could not.

If I could only picture to you the turmoil my brain was in. It was literally on fire. Thoughts were dashing back and forth within my head with lightning-like rapidity, each one seeming to

sear a snake-like trail across my very brain.

But out of the turmoil came a sudden thought. "Were persons things? If persons were things, then thoughts were persons. Why, I might conjure up some person. If I thought of a live person, would there then be two of him. I dared not do that. There were apt to be too many complications. Suppose I thought of a dead person. But what if he came back to me as he was in the grave; mummified, dead, or rotten flesh. I could not do that. I had seen enough of horror for one night. And dared I take it on myself to bring some one dead back to life?"

AND then I had the thought that has brought all the trouble that I am in. All my knowing life I have been creating characters and setting them down on paper. Why not conjure up one of these from one of my own stories. These characters are surely mine. I could do with them what I wished. I created them. And certainly they were things—things which thought had already created on paper. What thought I have put on some of them! Surely I had the right to create them again; to bring them to life, if life it would be. It would not be selfish. It could harm no one.

So I convinced myself.

But which of my characters should it be? That bothered me. Slowly, I ran them through my mind. There were dozens of them.

"Why not Sybil?" I mused. She is probably the only woman I ever really loved. Forgive me, darling wife. She is but a thought. To me, you are her embodiment.

Sybil: a blonde beauty with a brunette soul. If only I had brought you back, death would not face me now. Only sweet moments. How many nights

and days of love I have spent with you, creating you, polishing you, schooling you. Perhaps I made you a little heartless. Perhaps your morals—.

Enough! I did not bring Sybil back because I did not know what I would do with her in the morning. I did not know how I could explain her to my wife. Reluctantly, I put her out of my mind.

It would have to be a man, I decided. But which one?

The most popular of all my characters by far has been Pierre Robusto. He has been called by my kind critics the most admirable villain of all fiction. As all the reading public knows, I am most famed for my dastardly villains. Alas, this has been my undoing. If I had written only about good men, my life now would be safe. Safe and honored. I would not be writing this. But there is not time for self reproach or praise.

Pierre Robusto—Gigantic Robusto! Swordsman unequalled, brigand, pirate, murderer, renegade, braggart, bravo, drunkard, villain extraordinary: I had created him all these. And yet, I had left a soft spot in his heart; a soft spot that oft prompted him to return the heroine unravished to the hero.

I really loved Robusto more than any of my characters. In these, my last moments, I confess this. I am about to pay for it. He had grown a bit unruly at times, particularly in his drunken moments, as you will see; but with struggle I had always gotten him under control. What inhibitions of my own I have given rein to under cover of Robusto's villainy! What lecheries! What varied debaucheries he has committed for me! How sorry I was when I finally slaughtered him at the demands of an insistent editor.

My decision was made. I would create Robusto.

I erased all other thoughts from my mind. Then I leaned forward in my chair and pushed the switch in the top of the little man's box. I relaxed with closed eyes and concentrated on Robusto. I wondered a bit at first if doubt would interfere with this creation.

I wondered if Aladdin doubted just before he rubbed the lamp that first time. Perhaps Moses and Christ were just great souls who had discovered the secret that "THOUGHTS ARE THINGS". Then, for a few moments, I thought the whole thing was poppycock. And again, I decided that I was on the verge of a mental breakdown.

At last, I forced myself to think of Robusto and of nothing else. The room was deathly still with a tense, unnatural silence. In my mind I pictured Robusto as I had at first thought of him: a huge plumed hat at rakish angle, a red velvet suit, a long rapier at his side, a pistol in his sash, floppy-topped boots. Robusto, six feet three inches tall and broad as a door, a huge round face with mouth like a cutlass gash, clean shaven, huge, beak nose slightly bent, green-brown animal eyes that could see in the dark. He stood with his hands on his hips, huge head thrown back, laughing uproariously. Despite the careless, worn appearance of his clothes, there was something fastidious about the huge man. Yes, that was how I had first seen him.

**S**UDDENLY there came a "wooshing" sound similar to that made by the disappearing clothes of the shrunken man. I opened my eyes. Before me stood Robusto.

But was it the same Robusto? It seemed there were several changes. If he had not started to laugh in his thundering roar, I think I would not have recognized him. Instead of the plumed hat, he wore an ornate sombrero. In his

left hand he carried a coiled lariat, and in his right a snubnosed automatic. There was no rapier at his side.

His thundering laugh stilled. "Halloo, my friend," he bellowed. "Or shall I address you as creator? Or master? How? It seems like years since we caroused together." As he spoke, he holstered the automatic under his arm and tossed the lariat on the desk beside the little box. That lariat—more of it anon.

I jumped to my feet and grasped him by both hands. He was flesh and blood all right. At least, he felt like it.

"How are you, Robusto?" I cried. "It's good to see you again. Physically you seem the same."

"Hah!" roared Robusto, "I can't say the same for you. Hah! Hah! Hah! Hah! Man, the courage has seeped out of your eyes. Your hair is falling out. You've got a paunch. You're as soft as a fat housewife. Hah! Hah!" He had brought his sharp tongue with him.

"Success, Robusto, weighs heavily on one of my temperament." I said this pedantically.

"Bah! You never had much courage. Hah! Hah! Hah! You had me do all your villainies, all those villainies a man should do for himself."

"Perhaps, Robusto," I said unequivocally, "you were always conversant with my inmost thoughts and feelings. From you, nothing was ever concealed by me. Did I attempt evasion, your intuition sought me out!"

"Hah! That's it! Since you put me aside for other villains, you have no one to do your dirty work for you."

"I think you're right, Robusto. And besides, I married." It did not seem strange to me to talk so intimately with him.

"Hah! What? Married?" he bellowed. "That accounts for it. Tell me, what is she like? Your taste always

ran to redheads and blondes, as did mine. Tell me: did you tear her from the arms of a villain and crush her to your flat, unmanly bosom? Had she been ravished?"

"Robusto!" I cried. "You talk of my wife." I started up angrily. He had always been able to infuriate me.

"Bah! What of it? Hah! Hah! Hah! Your wife! Hah! Hah! You talk like one of your own heroes. Someplace in your makeup you must have a milk-sop streak to go with that homegrown paunch you're wearing."

I GAVE up. Robusto was in command. In any setting, he assumed the center of the stage. His dynamic character never permitted him to play a minor part. In an attempt to change the subject, I interrupted him:

"Why is it you are wearing a sombrero instead of your plumed hat? Why the lariat? And the automatic? Where is your rapier?"

"Hah! You ask me that," he roared. "You! Hah! You, my creator. I who am a part of you. When will you learn that you cannot deceive me? You remember, a while back, shortly after you had me slain—ah, that was a grand fight, that last one. As good as any I was ever in. And I was only killed by an accident. I thank you for that. Anyway, you remember when ideas started to dry up and editors were hard on your trail? You revived me. You brought me out of my glamorous past and made a cowboy of me. It was a grand life. I loved the plains. You had me well disguised. Few recognized me. But I was the same Robusto.

"And a year later, when you were hard pushed again, you took me to Chicago and made a gangster of me. You made me associate with the lowest of all villains: gangsters. Bah! They're not fit to bear the name of villain. Even

you know that a true villain is a gentleman. What a dog you made of me. I'll never forgive you for that degradation. These modern villains are vermin not worthy of the name. So, the automatic. Making a gangster of me was the most dastardly crime you ever committed."

I could see Robusto was terribly angry. Luminous fires burned in his green eyes. I watched him warily. Even I, who had created him, could not forecast his every act or mood. I knew that he was beyond me.

He looked about my studio. "Hah!" he exclaimed. "You have come up in the world since first you created me. Remember that attic hole where I first saw the light of day and committed my first villainies? I couldn't stride up and down that low-ceilinged dump as I can here. Dump! Faugh! A word I learned while in Chicago."

THEN Robusto's eyes lit on the crossed swords on the wall. His eyes blazed up with unholy glee.

"Hah! A sword! A rapier, no less."

He jerked a rapier from the wall, balanced it a moment in his hand, shook his head negatively, took the point in his left hand and bent the blade. It snapped.

"Hah!" he bellowed. "What foul dog made that? Anyone who puts poor steel in a blade should die ten thousand deaths, all horrible. It is the lowest form of villainy."

"It is only a facsimile," I said. "There on the wall is the original. A Toledo blade that should meet with approval from even your critical eye."

Robusto took the sword from the wall. He balanced it in his hand. He whipped it through the air until it sang, until it reflected a thousand different lightings from the desk light and from the flickering fire. Then, he bent the



blade almost to the hilt and laughed when it sprang back. He fell into position and lunged at an unseen foe. He fenced about the room. His movements were smooth and graceful. I remembered that he had never been bested in a duel; that he had never met anyone with a wrist to equal his.

(Perhaps these details are boresome. Forgive me. Remember, I have written most of my life, and this is the last time I will ever again set pen to paper. And believe what I set down here. It is not the less marvelous for being true.)

At last Robusto paused by the desk, half sitting on it.

"Hah! A fireplace, too. Where are the spits? There should be a dozen chickens turning before a fire like that. If I but had a bottle of wine and a chicken to roast. A chicken spitted on my sword to roast over the fire. And a bottle of wine."

**S**UDDENLY, as his words stopped, there came that 'wooshing' sound, and spitted on his sword was a fat capon. On the desk sat a tall bottle, its sides draped in cobwebs.

"The box!" I thought. A great fear gripped me.

Robusto's sudden arrival had caused me to forget the manner of his coming. I must close that switch on the box before Robusto wished for something else. Or I did. With that switch open, what might not happen?

"Black Magic!" cried Robusto. "You are well served these days, Sylvester. Some modern contrivance, I suppose. Would that I had wished for a cask of wine. A cask instead of a bottle."

"Woosh!" The bottle disappeared, and there beside the desk sat a small cask of wine.

"Hah! Hah! Hah!" roared Robusto. "You are clever. You know I am angry with you. And with this wine you think

to appease me. The score I have against you is a great one. I think I hate you more than anyone in the world; and yet there are moments when I almost love you."

"Thank God!" I thought. "He does not realize that the materialization of this wine is beyond me." At the same time, I wondered how I was going to get that switch on the box closed without him seeing me. I must wait an opportunity. If Robusto should come to suspect the power in that box, God help the world.

Robusto brushed the cobwebs from the cask. Then, holding it in his right hand, he bumped the bottom of it with the heel of his left hand. The bung popped smartly out. He laughed. Then he took a long drink from the cask. It seemed to calm him for a bit.

"What do you want of me tonight?" he asked. "Are you going to write of me again. If so, I warn you to be careful. Remember, since you first conceived me I have become someone in the world of literature. At first I was imprisoned in the narrow confines of your little brain. Then you set me free by publishing me. You gave me a thousand thousand minds to stamp about in. I am no longer yours. I am the world's."

"That's true, Robusto," I said in a conciliatory tone. "That's true. Just what would you suggest?"

"Just now," he answered, "the most pleasant thing I could think of would be a dozen good companions, all villains like myself, to help me consume this cask of wine."

"God forbid," I thought, "that any more of my own created villains be brought to earth this night." And through my mind coursed the names and features of the worst dozen of them. Their names and beings were in my mind so quickly, so rapid is thought,

that I had conceived them before I could think to stop thinking of them.

THERE came a long, drawn-out 'wooshing' sound that rose almost to a howl. Robusto looked at me with fearless wonder in his eyes and, stupefied, I gazed back at him. The horror of that which I had done appalled me. In my hands had been placed a machine that would probably—that may yet if I survive, or it does—change the course of the world's events and give a life of ease to each and every one of us; and I had used it to manufacturing villains of my own conception.

They began to arrive. First to materialize was suave Alexander Savran, one of my more recent villains. His black eyes gazed fearfully at us; then darted about as if looking for an exit. His were the coldest heart and the most crooked brain I had ever put in a villain.

Then came Jack Tain: red hair, squat body, bow legs, huge hands. It was he who committed the most horrible series of murders I ever conceived. The story was never published. I have always been ashamed of it. He stood before us now, his great paws opening and closing, as if he were seeking a throat to squeeze.

Next came bland Wung Chee, dressed as always in oriental costume, his hands concealed in his sleeves. He seemed unperturbed. He even smiled in his frozen way.

I stole a glance at Robusto. At the appearance of Alexander Savran he had sprung erect, rapier in hand. Now he stood alert, waiting for anything that might transpire. He was not afraid. Not Robusto.

"Voilà!" he roared. "I wished for comrades to drink my wine with me and they are coming."

Even as he spoke, Jack La Carse ar-

rived. Robusto saluted him with his sword.

I could not speak or think.

Fast on the heels of Jack La Carse came the others. "Pence" Smith, a matricide. Count Ambrosia, a dainty villain if ever there was one. Black Roger, earrings dangling, cutlass in hand, as jaunty as if he were striding his own quarter deck.

With each new arrival, Robusto fell back a pace. And I, somewhat recovering, inched toward the desk. If I could only throw that switch, perhaps I could shut off the unholy flood of monstrosity that was entering my studio. This urge overcame my fear.

The next one to arrive was Sir Raoul, caitiff knight, clad in armor of blackened steel. At his back hung his shield with its bar sinister, and under his arm was his helmet. His iron clad feet rang on the floor as he paced slowly forward out of thought into being.

Tony Amico, rat faced city gangster, evidently badly in need of "hop", and Nugget Bill, a recruit from the Dakota bad lands, followed fast on the heels of Sir Raoul. They were a peculiar combination, yet I wrote of them at about the same time and there has always existed in my mind a queer link between them.

Then came Melvin Johns, burly and pig faced. He styled himself "Friend of the People." A crooked politician of the lowest type, he had presidential aspirations.

After him came King Amoro I in his court robes. A king who, after having carved out a realm for himself in the jungles of South America, attempted to emulate Shahriyar by marrying and murdering daily. He, too, found his Shahrazad.

MY HAND, at last, was resting on the little box. It felt warm to my

touch like a radio tube that has burned for a long time. All eyes for a moment would be focused on King Amoro I, I hoped. I must take a chance. With a flick of a finger, I turned the switch. I sighed with relief. No one had noticed.

But a new worry confronted me. What should I do with these men? These beings? These villains? How should I handle this situation? I sank down in my chair.

You understand, of course, that my thought of these twelve men and their arrival in the room took place simultaneously. The whole scene must have occurred in several seconds at the most. It seems impossible, unbelievable, I know. But I saw it. They are here in the room now as I write. Their voices are a din in my ears. They are holding a wake for me and I am not yet dead.

Robusto was the first to recover. He laughed uproariously as was his wont, and took charge of affairs.

"Hah! Hah! Hah! I wished for comrades to help me drink this wine and here you are. All goodly villains too, if I'm any judge of villains. This should be a memorable evening. But wait." Robusto held up a hand imperiously. "First I must make a statement and ask a question." For a second he glared about him. "I am the greatest of villains. Do any of you care to dispute my claims?" Robusto's insufferable egotism had taken possession of him. It always did when there were people present. Too, the wine he had taken might have gone to his head.

For a moment, the twelve new arrivals were silent. At last, Wung Chee spoke in his cold and courteous voice: "Only a fool would deny an obvious fact."

Sir Raoul murmured: "There have been times when I would challenge you. Tonight—" He waved his hand. "Some-

time, mayhap, I will discuss my villainies with yours."

Then Melvin Johns interrupted in an irate voice: "I say. Why are we here? What is the meaning of this gathering? If there is anything to be done, let's do it. I have an appointment with the Mayor."

"And I was snatched from my quarter deck just as we had sighted a sail," barked Black Roger truculently. He shook his fierce head until his earrings danced.

"Has anyone a deck of 'coke'?" whimpered Tony Amico.

Count Ambrosia stepped forward and asked for Robusto: (So far they all seemed to be unaware of my presence.) "May I ask why we are here? This seems rather an unusual procedure," he added petulantly. He held a perfumed handkerchief to his nose.

For a moment, Robusto had no explanation. Suddenly he pointed to me. "There is your answer," he said. "He is my creator and I presume he is the maker of each of you. He has sent for us. Why, or how, does not matter. He has provided wine for our entertainment. He will play his tune soon and we will dance. What matters it?"

THEY turned on me. I saw hate in all their eyes.

"Good evening, gentlemen," I said, as casually as I could.

"Sylvester!" hissed Alexander Savran.

"I do not care to dance tonight," said Wung Chee. His voice was ice.

"I'd do anything for a shot of 'coke,' Mr. Sylvester," whined Tony Amico.

Then King Amoro I spoke up: "Might I suggest something?"

"The King can do no wrong," said Sir Raoul, bowing.

King Amoro I continued: "It would seem that we have all served this man

Sylvester long enough. We have done his every command. We have amused him. Tonight he should amuse us."

"Western justice and good horse sense," drawled Nugget Bill.

"Justice knows no creed, no color. It is not orientated," said Wung Chee.

"Villains," roared Robusto, "there is wine to drink. Come." With his heel he kicked in the top of the cask. The sour aroma of wine filled the room.

"Before pleasure, there is duty to perform," sighed Count Ambrosia. "I agree with the King. We should judge this man Sylvester."

The idea seemed to please Robusto. "Hah!" he roared. "Let's constitute ourselves a court and each lodge our grievances against him. You twelve shall be the jury and I, the judge, will pronounce sentence on him. What do you think of that, Sylvester? A nice situation, eh? Hah! Hah! Hah!"

"It seems," I answered as coolly as possible, "my fate rests in your hands."

"Why be so formal about all this?" asked Alexander Savran. "Sylvester must die. Or we must. He killed me once, or had me killed. I was shot in the back. I never knew who did it."

At this point, I remember, I wondered just how these men would figure out their being here alive, as each and every one of them had been killed in some manner at the end of the story or stories he had appeared in. I hoped devoutly they would not think to ask.

"Yours was a pleasant death," remarked Sir Raoul. "He had me killed by peasant rabble who overpowered me. They roasted me in this very armor over a slow fire. I was hours in dying."

"He had me hung for a horse thief," cried Nugget Bill.

"I sat in the electric chair," said Pence Smith.

"I starved to death," almost whispered Jack Tain. "A posse was hot

after me. I stumbled and fell down an old mine shaft. I broke my leg. They did not find me. And I could not get out."

"I was machine-gunned by my own mob," hissed Tony Amico.

"He frightened me into taking my own life," said Jack La Carse.

"A mutinous crew forced me to walk my own plank," growled Black Roger.

"I was stabbed with a hatpin by a young girl whom I had forgotten to get a job after—after—. Anyway, she stabbed me," Melvin Johns said this blushing, as if forced into the confession.

"Yours was somewhat like my fate," murmured Count Ambrosia. "I had seduced twin sisters. They discovered my duplicity and called on me together. I was in my tub. The papers, I presume, called it suicide."

"That was almost as funny as my death," laughed King Amoro I. "I had ordered my latest wife executed. She drugged me and handed me over to the executioner in her costume. Ah, well, his was a practiced hand."

"Hah! I have died several deaths at his hands," said Robusto. "Once by dagger thrust. Once by lead. And once by accident. I fell over a cliff."

"Pleasant deaths, all. Why do you complain?" asked Wung Chee coldly. "For me he chose an ancient Chinese method. Water falling on my brow. A drop a minute. I lived three eternities or more."

"Sylvester," said Robusto, "you have just heard yourself accused of thirteen deaths—no fifteen, counting my extra two. What have you to say for yourself?"

"Nothing. If you will examine your own lives, you will discover sufficient reason for your deaths."

They laughed almost in unison at my reply.

I HAD answered as bravely as I could. I do not know that I was actually afraid. My greatest fear at least was not for myself. I only feared that they should begin to wonder how they came here and eventually discover the secret of the little box.

"The jury, I presume, is unanimous in their opinion that Sylvester is guilty and that the verdict should be death?" queried Robusto.

There was no dissenting voice.

"But how shall he die?" asked King Amoro I. "Beheading is my favorite mode of dispatch for those who displease me, but my executioner is not here, unfortunately."

"Nor are there facilities to dispose of him by the tedious method he used to kill me," said Wung Chee.

"There is a fireplace and a fire," said Sir Raoul. "I'll lend my armor."

"I do not like the smell of scorching flesh," interrupted Robusto.

I was grateful to him.

"Just let me close my hands about his throat," almost pleaded Jack Tain, holding up his huge paws. "I'll show you something pretty. His eyes will bulge. His tongue will drool."

Count Ambrosia waved his perfumed handkerchief beneath his nose. "I saw a man hanged once. It was very amusing."

"That's it," said Nugget Bill, much pleased. "Let's hang him. He'll dance a pleasant jig for us."

"When at sea, I favor the plank," remarked Black Roger. "But on land, hanging is the only method."

"And here's a rope handy," said Melvin Johns, picking up Robusto's lariat.

"Hah! Hanging suits me," agreed Robusto. "Has anyone any other suggestions?"

No one seemed to have any objections to offer to my death. Not even Robusto. But I should not have been

surprised at that. I created him. One of the traits I had given him was to choose always the stronger side. How coldly they all discussed my death; and their own for that matter. I dared not remonstrate with them. I dared not even suggest to them the manner of their being.

"Oh!" I thought. "If only I could use the little man's box to dispose of them." But I was afraid to make an overt act or movement of any sort toward that box, for fear that they might discover the secret of it.

(If I die this night by hanging, or by any other means because of these, my own villains, know, whoever reads this, that I died a martyr. At least, I want to think that in these, my last moments. I might have saved myself by using the little box; or by selling its secret to them for my life. But they grow restless. I must finish.)

"Let's hang him then, and hurry to our wine," Robusto cried, taking his lasso from Johns and deftly spreading its noose.

"JUST one request," I managed to say in a rather thin voice. I could not bring myself to plead with them for my life. "It's customary to grant a condemned man his last request, you know. Perhaps I neglected it in some of your cases."

"Don't make us a speech," interrupted Alexander Savran viciously.

"Your request. Hurry. I'm thirsty," roared Robusto.

"It is just this, I said. 'Stay my execution for an hour or so, while you drink your wine, and let me set down on paper a last story. You all know writing has been my life. Is this too much to ask of you? Remember, I am your creator.'"

"It's a trap," said Melvin Johns.

"Bad luck will come to us if we deny

this request," said Black Roger. I'm glad I created him a superstitious soul.

"Let him contemplate his death on paper. It will only make it more poignant," said Wung Chee. "Before we hang him, we will make him read what he has written. If it incriminates us, we will destroy it."

"All right," agreed Robusto. "Until we finish the wine. Here, I'll clear your desk for you." And with his rapier blade he swept everything off my desk onto the floor.

I gasped with horror. My eyes followed the little box through the air. Suppose the switch were thrown.

The box lit; luckily, right side up. No harm was done. But any possibility of saving myself by use of the box was gone. It was beyond my reach.

"Twenty-six eyes watch you," said Wung Chee softly. He stooped over and picked up the little man's false teeth from the floor. "What are these?" He laid them on the desk.

"I was going to write a story about them," I said.

Wung Chee joined the others about the fire. Since then, they have not bothered me. Not one of them has spoken to me. They have been noisy and quarrelsome with each other. But in my eagerness to get this all on paper, I have hardly noticed them.

And now I have set down everything that has happened. I have written it in my own system of shorthand. None of them can decipher it. When they ask me to read it, I'll make up a story as I go.

I must stop. Their patience will not last much longer. But each word I write now seems to add a moment to my life. Perhaps, in writing this, I have been tedious in detail. But remember, this is not a story. This is true. This is not imagination. This happened.

Yet, as I look back over tonight's happenings, nothing has occurred that could not be the imaginings of a crazed mind. Perhaps, after all, this did not happen. I cannot tell. But I believe it did. With all my knowledge, I believe it did happen.

WHAT a strange setting for my death: my beautiful studio, a moon-lit night, at least it was moon-lit until clouds obscured the moon, and a dozen villains of my own creation who have decided that I must hang—hang on the very evening in which power beyond human conception was placed into my hands, power which I immediately misused.

I wish the moon would come forth again. Its great round face would at least be friendly—a friendly face to look into when death comes.

As if in answer to my wish, the moon is coming forth. The clouds are rolling by. This has been a magic night. I just stole a look at the little box on the floor to see if its switch was still in place. The moon appeared so quickly in answer to my wish, it seemed supernatural. The moon is fully uncovered now. Its beams have formed their golden roadway across the sea into my very studio. It is so beautiful . . .

My God! There is that 'wooshing' sound. The little box has disappeared from off the floor.

Did the villains hear? I glance at them. They are all on their feet, listening intently.

"What is it?" asks Wung Chee.

"Hah!" roars Robusto. "Sylvester has betrayed us."

He springs toward me, rapier in hand.

But suddenly, halfway to me, he is frozen in his tracks. The others start toward me in a mob. But they, too, are caught even as Robusto. They are

perfectly still. Like so many statues.

I remember now what the little man said: "I came in on a moonbeam. They will follow me."

Who are these beings? Are they from the moon? From another earth? Perhaps when the cloud obscured the moon, just as the little man disappeared, they were cut off from the world. But now the moon is out. And we are doomed.

What a horrible sight! My pen cannot portray it. My mind can not conceive it. My thirteen villains are slowly melting toward the floor as if they were thirteen snowmen in a tropic sun.

My villains are only a foot high now—just mounds of clothing sinking to the floor. The air in the room is cold. It is like the inside of an ice box. My hand is stiff with the cold. I can hardly grasp my pen.

My villains are all gone. They vanished all at once. Almost without a sound. I'm alone in the room again.

There is nothing here to prove that any of this ever happened but a set of false teeth.

I am frightfully cold. I am freezing. I know! They have me! They're turning their rays on me! I can feel myself shrinking! I'm getting smaller! I'm disintegrating! I'm—I'm disappearing! I'm—

\* \* \*

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Here ends this strange manuscript. As if to show that this is not a story, but is an account of Guy Sylvester's last night on earth, his writing in the last paragraph grows gradually smaller, as if the hand that was holding the pen was shrinking even as it wrote. For instance, in the paragraph above, the last "I'm" is only one fourth the size of the first "I'm."

Moreover, on Sylvester's pen are two distinct thumb prints, identically the same, save that one is only one quarter the size of the other.

THE END

# WHO LAUGHS LAST...

By LAWRENCE TRILBY

**I**T IS the fashion today to laugh at and ridicule the mystic. In fact there are some current magazines which are going all out for this sort of thing. "It's all a big joke, mystics are nuts, let's laugh, boys," is what they are saying. Well, it's very easy to do this. Our modern scientific world scorns superstition and mystery above all else. We are scientists our teachers tell us.

But there's more to it than that. There are many things that have not been explained by orthodox science. Scientists have in certain cases—like Sir Oliver Lodge—attempted to delve into the field of mysticism to seek their answers. All they got from their colleagues was the horse laugh. But the problems they proposed still haven't been answered.

What, for example, is the human soul? Is there life after death? Is there a Heaven and a Hell? Questions like these do not permit of the scientists' methods of discussing. You can't tackle problems like this with an atom smasher. Elec-

tric energy doesn't help to give an answer to these philosophical problems.

Therefore we think that those who ridicule the mystically inclined, without giving them a fair chance to explain themselves, are acting boorishly. It is only right to attempt to understand what the other man is doing.

Dr. Rhine—everyone has heard of him—at Duke University, is doing everything in his power, for example, to confirm the existence of extra-sensory perception. And it seems to us that he has done a very good, sound job. Yet, the same detractors we spoke of before are mocking and ridiculing him without giving him his due and fair consideration.

We have a strong suspicion that this attitude is going to backfire one of these days. The time is coming when orthodox men of science are either going to use the same methods themselves or they are going to ask the people who know. It's not a wise idea to laugh at something you don't understand. It may surprise you.



# THE MEMORY-SCOPE

By

★ CARTER T. WAINWRIGHT ★

THERE is only one trouble with secret, coded communication—it is not "secret." All through time, men have been trying to devise ciphers, codes, methods of transmitting messages that can't be cracked by an enemy. Unfortunately this is impossible. No mode of communication has ever been devised that cannot be read by an enemy if he is given enough time. The most intricate systems of coding can be broken down by analysts. It may take some time, but it can be done. The U. S. Navy showed that very well during the last war when it cracked the highly-touted secret code of the Imperial Japanese Fleet.

The problem of sending a secret message is something like this: your message is translated into a set of symbols known only to you and the recipient of your message. Technically then, the message should be safe from prying eyes, even if it is picked up—which it is almost certain to be—because the enemy hasn't your key to the code in which you've sent the message. But no matter how elaborate and abstruse the message you send may be, you are forced to use this series of symbols to convey the intelligence you wish transmitted. By a series of logical analytical processes, the enemy, who has without doubt also received the message, proceeds to subject it to a treatment which sooner or later will give him the contents of the message. For three thousand years men have tried to devise completely secret methods of communication—by use of coded messages, ranging from semaphore hand signals to modern "jumbled" radio transcriptions. And for three thousand years these same messages have been decoded by the people who weren't supposed to be able to read them.

Offhand you might think it should be impossible to crack codes sent by modern radio. However, the enemy listens there too. He can monitor—listen and record—all the frequencies that you are likely to use. Then from his recordings and at his leisure he can study and break down your messages.

One technique of sending secret messages goes like this: the message is transmitted from a phonograph record played at a much higher speed than usual—in addition, of course, the message is coded. The net result is a brief outburst of gibberish. When this gibberish is picked up at the other end and recorded—then played back at a lower speed and decoded—the message has been con-

veyed. The only catch to this procedure, is that the enemy does the same thing.

The U. S. Navy (and presumably other forces) has picked up a variation of the above technique, that was used against us during the war by the German Navy during its submarine campaign.

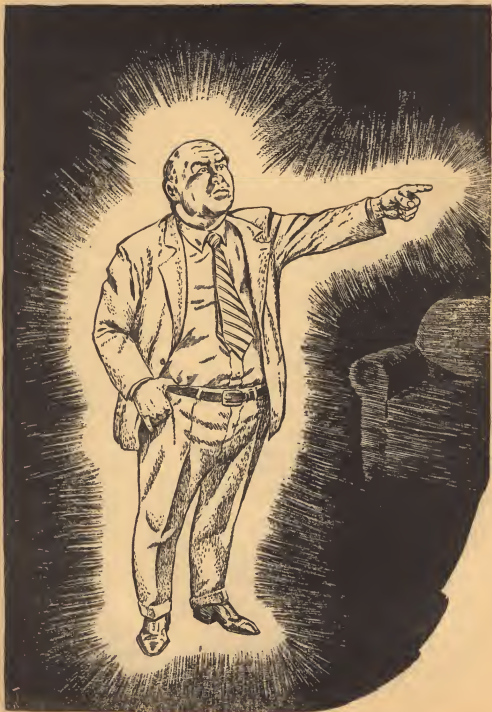
It is really an adaptation of a television-radar method. The message was decoded, compressed into a brief pulse, added to a carrier radio wave and then transmitted. The variation here consisted of the fact that the pulse was extremely brief—just a few seconds in duration. When and if the message was picked up by us or by the British and recorded—all that was available audibly was a brief "dah" on the record or if it was played back more slowly, a longer "dah-ah-ah-ah." The whole reason for extreme brevity of the message lay in the fact that the submarine which was sending the message to its home base or to another submarine, merely wanted to stick its antenna out of the water for an instant. The less time that the sub was surfaced, the less chance that it would be spotted by planes or radar. Also the shorter the message the less chance that the location of the sub could be determined by ordinary radio direction-finders.

Here was the trick, however, in receiving the message. It was not designed to be received by an ordinary radio and then recorded. Instead, the received signal was applied to an oscilloscope with a screen of *extremely long retentivity*! If applied to an ordinary oscilloscope screen, the trace would naturally vanish almost instantly. But on a long-duration screen, the pulse-message would appear as a wavy line with many convolutions—the convolutions determining the content of the message! Simple and effective as the system is, it can, of course, be broken like any other. All that is required is an oscilloscope with a screen of long retentivity. The Germans had devised one which would retain the mark of the cathode-ray for nearly fifteen minutes—ample time to allow the trace to be studied at leisure—photographed if necessary.

While in the future this method will undoubtedly be used to a great extent, it is now no guarantee of secrecy. Any method devised for the sending of secret messages is only temporary. Possibly in the not too distant future, the use of telepathic sensitives will enable true secrecy to be maintained.

THE END







The little man was bathed in an eerie glow as he pointed commandingly

# The LOST POWER

By GUY ARCHETTE

**The power had been lost; but the little man had it—and he could use it!**

I WAS taking the bus to work when I met this guy. Looking back now, I still think it's queer, the way he got that seat beside me.

It's a long ride to work, and I'm lucky enough to have a seat most of the time, since I board the bus near one end of the line. I live in a distant part of the city, in a little, two-story brick house. Just Ann, the baby, and me. I'm a public relations expert for a television network, and I like the job.

Anyway, the bus fills up long before I reach my stop in the downtown section of the city. There are always a lot of strap-hangers, and these watch hopefully for us more fortunate individuals to vacate our seats. Tired faces, accusing faces, bitterly resigned faces.

But sometimes it's rather amusing. There are some passengers who feel that the paying of their fare positively entitles them to a seat. And when one is vacated they rush for it in undigni-

fied and impolite haste.

Like the grimly determined guy that morning.

He had been standing near me for some time, his sharp black eyes darting from me to the other occupant of my seat with a kind of burning expectancy. I could see that he was bleakly resolved to sit down or break an elbow trying. The slightest move from me or my companion would send him into an eager crouch. He reminded me of a cat beside a mouse hole.

So when finally the man beside me rose to leave, I watched Determined in amused interest. An expression of delight momentarily brightened his face. He stepped back to allow the other man to leave, elbowing his fellow strap-hangers out of the way and glaring at them as though daring them to take what he had already singled out for his own. None were willing to engage in a tooth and nail struggle, however, and Determined triumphantly began that series of movements preliminary to sitting down.

He never made it. The paper was suddenly knocked from my hands and I was jostled. The next thing I knew, there was a plump man with a ruddy, round face sitting beside me.

I was amazed. Even more so was Determined. He looked positively awed. A moment later he looked furious. But he said nothing, evidently considering himself beaten fairly and according to his own rules of the game.

It's a wonder how that plump guy did it. I'd been glancing at the people around me, but I hadn't noticed him among them. He must have jumped clear from the back of the bus, impossible as it seemed.

He picked up my paper. "A thousand apologies," he said. "Hope I haven't hurt you."

"Not at all," I answered warily.

He seemed disposed to make conversation.

"Crowded, isn't it?"

"Always is," I said.

"I dislike crowded public vehicles of this kind. I don't see why people ride in them."

"Not much else they can do," I pointed out. "Cars are expensive these days, and there's no place to park them, even if you can afford one."

The plump man shrugged. "Perhaps. But has it ever occurred to you that a conveyance such as this is a sign of barbarism?"

"Barbarism?" I echoed.

"Of course. A mentally enlightened people would have no need for buses or trolley cars to carry them about."

"I don't get you," I said. "How else would they get around? Walk?"

The plump man made a gesture of impatience. "Of course not!" he snapped. "They'd levitate!"

THAT surprised me. I'd already become aware that my companion was odd, but I hadn't realized it was this bad.

"Levitation," I said. "It's impossible."

"Is it? Look here, I presume you've had a good education. So no doubt you know something of psychology. By the way, my name is Walters."

"Mine is Blake," I answered. "Yes, I've studied psychology."

"Then you must know that there are large areas of the brain that have no known function. Now, in an organ as highly developed and specialized as the brain, just why should this be so? Those areas must have a reason for being there."

"That's true," I said.

"But why?" Walters persisted. "Why are they there, if apparently they have no reason for being there?"

"I'm afraid I don't know."

"I'll tell you. They are there because they are centers for senses, powers, abilities, that we no longer use. Levitation is one of them. Telepathy, clairvoyance, telekinesis, and regeneration are others, to name a few. Now, understand that we haven't lost these powers. All we've lost is the ability to use them. With the proper coaching, any normal person can be taught to put them back into function."

"Myself, for example?" I asked.

Walters looked at me strangely. "Yes," he said.

There was a moment of silence. The bus ground to a stop. Several passengers left through the rear door, while more came in through the front. Then the bus started again.

"The trouble with almost all people is that they refuse to believe," Walters went on. "They credit only the information brought to them by the ordinary five senses, regarding as supernatural anything which lies beyond them. They have erected barriers of doubt in their minds, through which no new or radical knowledge can penetrate."

He leaned toward me, his ruddy, round face earnest. "A man who does not believe in the existence of a thing cannot be taught to use it. The mind must be receptive, free from prejudice. Which is why the people of this age are barbarians. They live in a primitive, mechanistic culture. Machines and tools do for them what they could do with the powers lying dormant in their minds—and with far less effort.

"Here, for instance, they allow themselves to be crammed within the limited space of this bus, jolted and jostled, made weary and irritable, all for the sake of covering a few miles of distance, when, if they could use the powers nature gave them, they could rise into the air and soar quickly and easily to their

destinations."

Walters' voice softened. "But the time will come when all men will once again be in possession of their god-like powers. It will take many years, of course. In the meantime, we, the adept few, will have to wait, scattered and lonely, fearing to display our powers to an ignorant world."

I gasped and stared at him. "Do you mean that you're one of those who can use the lost powers you've mentioned?"

There was something of mockery in Walters' answering smile. "Of course," he said. "How else did I get this seat?"

Unfortunately, I had no further time to debate the matter with him—the bus had reached my stop. I muttered a hasty farewell and elbowed my way to the rear exit.

I thought of Walters frequently at work that day. Memory of him and the things he had told me just couldn't be pushed aside.

WHEN I got home that evening, I told Ann all about it. We had quite a laugh over the "lost powers." Ann told me how she wished she could levitate herself up the stairs whenever Billy yelled for attention, and do all her household chores by mental remote control.

Somehow, I couldn't escape the feeling that I would see Walters again. It worried me, because people like him can be dangerous.

And I was right. I did see him again.

It happened around four the next morning. A voice spoke to me, waking me up. Walters' voice. Not in my ear. In my mind.

"Blake, this is Walters. I want to talk to you. You'll find me down in the living room."

Softly I climbed out of bed, and quietly I got into slippers and robe. I eased myself down the stairs. My

nerves were tight with unease, and I forgot about that top set of steps. They squeaked loudly.

I paused to listen, hoping that the sound wouldn't waken Ann or Billy. It didn't, though, and I went down the rest of the way.

The living room was dark, but I could see Walters standing by the coffee table. There was a sort of glow around him.

"What are you doing here?" I demanded in a whisper.

"I had to see you, Blake." His voice was still in my mind.

"How did you get in here?"

"I didn't, Blake. You see me as a mental projection of myself."

"What do you want?" The words were raw in my throat.

"Let me tell you something first, Blake. You see, in a distant part of this world is a tiny group of men and women who are all in possession of the lost powers. These people—call them adepts—are constantly engaged in doing research, developing new techniques, paving the way for the glorious days to come. But there are so few of them and they have so much to do, that their progress is being hampered in many directions.

"One reason for this is their lack of a skilled mental co-ordinator. Once they had such an assistant, a carefully trained, highly efficient young man. But three years ago he had a disagreement with the leader of the group and disappeared. His loss was a serious one, and every effort was made to locate him. However, he had developed his mental abilities to such an extent that he could disguise himself mentally and physically. We never found him, and I have been searching for another of like talents to take his place."

"What has that to do with me?" I asked.

"You possess the latent abilities of a good co-ordinator, Blake. I boarded that bus purely by chance in my search, and the force of your mind hit me at once. It was no accident that the passenger beside you left his seat and I took it. I literally forced him out, then teleported myself into it.

"You can be trained, Blake. Your mind is open and receptive. You pretend disbelief of what is termed the supernatural in order to conform with the prevailing mode of thought. So—I offer you the position of co-ordinator within this circle of adepts. I offer you the thrilling contact of mind to mind, the delightful experience of levitation. I offer you immortality through telekinetic renewal and regeneration . . . power that can move mountains and blast cities to dust."

**I**T WAS tempting. Immortality. The power of a god. But I remembered the way Ann's brown, soft hair gleamed in the sunlight, and the way her small nose wrinkled when she laughed. And I remembered Billy's eyes, so much like mine, and the way his hands curled into tiny fists when he slept.

Swell people, Ann and Billy. You don't give them up easily. Not even for immortality and god-like power. They were all the immortality and power I ever wanted.

I told Walters that. The incredulous amazement in his thought hit me like a blow.

"But this is foolish!" he protested. "Think of what you're giving up."

"I know," I said. "I don't want it."

"Look," Walters said desperately. "I'll give you time to think it over, Blake. No doubt you'll see things differently in a few days."

I shook my head. "My mind is made up, and I won't change it. I'm happy here. I wouldn't exchange my happi-

ness for a place as king of the entire Universe."

"This is final, Blake?"

I nodded firmly. "Final," I said.

"I'm sorry, Blake." Walters gazed at me sadly, then made a forlorn gesture. "Farewell, then." His mental projection abruptly vanished.

I never saw him again.

Feeling better than I had felt for

some time, I started back up the stairs. Back to Ann and Billy. But near the top I paused. I remembered that top set of steps and the loud way they squeaked. I didn't want to awaken my little family.

So I levitated and floated up the rest of the way. Even in three years I hadn't forgotten how to do it. . . .

THE END

# AUTOMATIC SCALES

By

RICHARD CASEY



SOMETIMES things which appear simple are difficult. An excellent example of this, is the problem of measuring the consumption of liquids—not alcoholic ones. When aircraft and automotive engines are put on the test stand, it is extremely desirable to know very accurately what their consumption of fuel is in terms of gallons per hour. This is ordinarily not easy to measure, but with the aid of electronics which is creeping into every phase of industrial activity, it is now a solved problem.

An ordinary scale is used, a scale such as foods are weighed on. A measured sample of fuel is placed on the scale, and the pointer of the scale is watched by a clever photo-electric cell arrangement coupled with an amplifier and a recording mechanism. As the pointer moves in the scale, it intercepts a beam of light which passes through the photocell. This in turn naturally causes a change in the electric current which is passing through the cell. The changing current passes through the amplifier and then through the recorder and because the whole apparatus is suitably calibrated, an accurate knowledge of the loss of weight of the measured sample of fuel is known.

This is but one example of a gradually increasing change in modern industry. Within the past ten years there has been a gradual but definite revolution in industry. It took a long time for industry to accept the vacuum tube, but now that it has, it's going all the way.

A vacuum tube, with a suitable combination of amplifiers, relays, selsyns and other gadgets can do almost anything a human being can do—and do it faster and more accurately. Above all, when vacuum tubes are used, there is no time lag in the machinery, and as fast as a change is noted, it can be used to correct a process. This

is extremely valuable, because before damage can be done, the correct change has already been made.

This has been mentioned before but it is worthy of repeating. The change that is taking place in industry is this: it is becoming more and more automatic. Put a photocell where once there was a human eye. Put a selsyn where once there was a human muscle. Machines never tire, never make mistakes, and have built within them gadgets which warn of their failure. Such an arrangement cannot be approached by man. Consequently they are superior to him in most routine jobs.

But regardless of the substitution of machines for men, men always remain the brains and the designers. The machines can do nothing there—even the vaunted mechanical brains are nothing but extensions of Man's faculties.

More and more industry is becoming a vast assemblage of robots, beneficent robots, willing and able to work without rest, able to produce tirelessly, and able to produce efficiently. Men are automatically falling into their place as the designers and watchers of the machines. The results are wonderful and even if a reversion to their past was desired, it is too late to accomplish it.

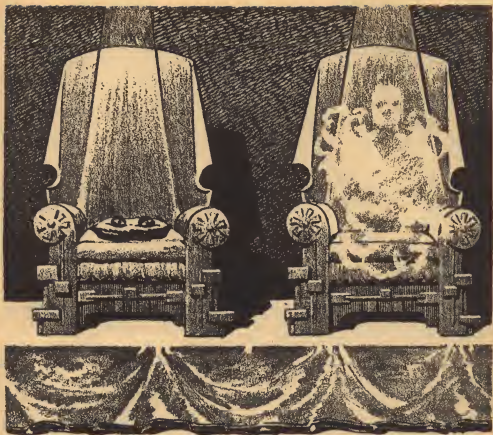
The only limits to this robotic procedure are applied by Man's ingenuity. That seems limitless. God only knows how many hundreds of millions or billions of vacuum tubes have been applied to industry. And the end is not in sight. The United States produces and uses half of all the vacuum tubes in the world and it seems unbelievable that this figure will increase as time goes on. Remember that every time a vacuum tube is put into industry, it is making it easier for us to live.



They stared in fascination  
- at the old Oriental, and  
at the strange occupants  
of the other thrones.

**Old Ting Sun Fu knew the secret of  
the passage to the fourth dimension.  
But you had to drink his tea to get  
there—and the taste was very bitter.**





# The STRANGE TEA of TING SUN FU

By LEROY YERXA

**B**OB HANNIGAN paused before the window display of Chinese novelties. This was the shop of Ting Sun Fu, where delicate glass ornaments and beautiful metal pieces reminded one of some remote Chinese temple.

Hannigan grinned at a two-foot rep-

lica of a Chinese peasant, buckets slung across the shoulders, moving stolidly along in the midst of the display. Hannigan liked Ting Sun Fu's windows. He'd never been in the shop because there was little room in Hannigan's life for pretty things. Reporters who worked for Clamface Bailey of the *World Tele-*



gram didn't take time out from murder and crime to decorate their rooms with Chinese jade or rare ivory carvings.

Yet, Hannigan was thinking, there wouldn't be any harm in just going in for a look. He didn't have to buy anything.

It was growing uncomfortably warm on the sidewalk. A three o'clock sun slanted its heat from the West, and left a small shadow close to the window. Hannigan shuffled toward the door a few steps, then saw a big car drive up to the curb.

Sheila Mann climbed out of the back seat, leaned toward her chauffeur, and spoke in a low, urgent voice. Hannigan knew the Mann girl because she made the front page of the Society Section every Sunday, and her face was so lovely that even the worst photographer on the *Telegram* couldn't spoil a print of it.

He watched her come almost directly toward him across the walk, then realized vaguely that something was wrong—decidedly wrong.

She stopped short as she came up to him. He touched his hatbrim in a quick, rather neat motion, and his face turned slightly red.

"Will you pardon me?" she asked. "You know, you are blocking that door very effectively."

"I'm—I'm sorry." His dignity was gone. He felt like a fool as he sidestepped and allowed her to enter.

He watched her as she went in and let the door close slowly behind her. Then, his mind brought back that little error, and placed it where he could study it. His mind was trying to re-deliver a message that he had almost received before, but not quite. It was while Sheila Mann had been tripping lightly toward him. Sure, her eyes were blue and sparkling, and her hair

long and sleek and chestnut colored. That was enough to make a man remember her a long time.

But it wasn't that.

Hannigan's mind was trained for details. Trained to notice with the help of his eyes, not the pleasant everyday things, but the small, sometimes well concealed oddities.

Then, what was it that he had missed? The sun was hotter than ever. Hannigan ran his index finger around under his collar and lifted his hat higher on his forehead.

THE sun. Didn't the sun have something to do with it? He stepped away from the cool shadow of the building, and the heat of the sun hit him with fierce intensity. His shadow, distorted and rather undignified, flopped along beside him, half in the street, half in the gutter.

Good God, that was it. His eyes had noticed it because it was all wrong—different than it should have been. It had taken all this time for his inner mind to convey the message.

His shadow pointed to the East, bouncing along in the gutter. The sun was in the West.

*Yet, when Sheila Mann walked toward him across the sidewalk, her shadow travelled ahead of her, a dark blob on the sidewalk, defying the bright rays of the sun, located directly opposite from the direction it should have been.*

IN HANNIGAN, there was an ever active urge to get to the bottom of things. That was what made him valuable to Bailey of the *Telegram*. That was what made him one of the best writers on the sheet, because Hannigan hated bloodshed, horror and crime. Hated them so much that he wrote vividly of every crime he was forced to cover. Hannigan, they said, could cover

a story about a killer and make the man turn himself in the next morning, sobbing and broken hearted to think that he was responsible for such a horrible crime against humanity.

Clamface Bailey, aristocratic, bald-headed managing editor of the *Telegram*, said, on one occasion, "The trouble with you, Hannigan, is that your mother gave you a homely face, an innocent expression and a clean, honest way of facing things. You can't chase criminals that way. The minute you start walking with some gorilla who's just knifed his wife, he breaks down and wants to join the Salvation Army. You're too damned easygoing, boy. Get tough and make your killers sound tough. This sheet needs sensation, not accounts of poor old ladies who get hauled into police court because their husbands beat them with mop handles. Get tough stuff, and make it live."

Hannigan made his stuff live after that. He started picking up stories that even Bailey checked on before he dared use them. Hannigan became the "sensational kid" of the office. He got into the "damndest places," Bailey told him, "but you come back with the stuff, and it's always hotter than bathtub gin."

And now Hannigan was on another story. A story that even he refused to believe until he checked his own eyesight.

He turned casually and retracted his footsteps toward the shop. Two or three customers went into Ting Sun Fu's, but their shadows were normal and where they should be. Hannigan chuckled at himself. Funny how a man's eyes could deceive him. Yet, he waited.

The door opened several times. Each time, he expected to see Sheila Mann come out. She didn't. Four o'clock came, but not Sheila. Then four-thirty, and he had a date at Police Court at

five. Hannigan swore softly. If Sheila Mann dropped her shadow in the wrong direction . . . If you stopped to think of it, the idea had to be false. It was certainly impossible for any such thing to actually happen.

Or was it?

Hannigan shrugged. To hell with Sheila Mann. He glanced at his watch. Twenty to five. A cab was moving slowly down his side of the street. He hailed it and started across the walk. The sun was low, directly behind him. And his shadow, which should have been directly in front of him, was suddenly missing. It all happened in a few seconds, because the cab drew up, and as Hannigan turned the door handle, he noticed carefully that the line of cars all threw shadows to the East. Frantically, he whirled around, as though to catch his shadow before it escaped completely. There it was, long and dark, stretched out on the sidewalk pointing directly West, *toward the sun*.

Queer panic flooded Hannigan's mind. He slipped quickly inside the cab and sank back into the cushions. "Police Court," he said. "Fifth and—"

"Yes sir." The cab pulled out into traffic. The driver didn't have to be told. He'd been there before.

IT BECAME increasingly evident to Bob Hannigan that somehow he had to be alone with Sheila Mann—had to share with her this strange secret of his. Sheila was as far away from him as a peacock from a sparrow, and outside of the shadow thing, he had no wish to enter her private world. Overnight, however, Sheila had become the most important woman in the world to Hannigan. Perhaps she would have an explanation of the reverse shadows.

Hannigan hid himself in the dark halls of Police Court and didn't venture out until after sundown. He slept little

that night, and at seven o'clock the following morning, he hurried downstairs from his third floor room at the Exter Hotel. There was a small garden at the rear of the hotel, and he was going to test his shadow there.

Hannigan had a queer, shaky feeling in his knees when he opened the door and went out into the sun. The bright ball of heat was already well established in the East, and the hotel threw its long shadows toward the alley. He kept going until he reached a grassy spot close to the alley fence. He stepped out into the sunlight, still half expecting his shadow to leap ahead of him, against the stained boards of the fence. The shadow wasn't there. It had been yesterday, and the day before, but it wasn't there this morning.

He turned slowly, in case anyone might be watching him from the windows above, and stared back. The shadow was there, where it had been last night, completely defying any attempt on the part of the bright sun to force it back to its proper position.

Very nervous about the whole thing, Hannigan hurried back into the hotel and up to his room. What next? He couldn't go around all day with that shadow sneaking along on the wrong side of him. As a rule, you didn't pay much attention to people's shadows. But this was different. It seemed as though everyone in the city would be waiting to stare and make remarks about him after he passed.

Hannigan looked up Sheila Mann's number in the telephone directory. Hollywood Hills, 35 Wenshire Drive. He shuddered. He'd never so much as pointed his feet in that direction before, and he was awed. Carl Mann, Sheila's father, owned the entire south portion of the Hills, or at least held a mortgage on it. Sheila was pictured posed on the edge of million dollar swimming pools,

or wrapping Red Cross bandages in someone's thirteen thousand dollar living room.

Well, maybe he could get up the courage to see Sheila Mann, but at a later date. He would try Ting Sun Fu's shop now.

TING SUN FU'S was a big store, and two huge windows faced the street. Each night, and Hannigan knew, for he had passed the place for years, blinds were drawn to make the windows dark and a little mysterious. Now, at nine o'clock in the morning, a small Chinese boy was carefully pulling the blinds up. The doors were still locked.

The little Chinese boy walked carefully among the art goods, and watched Hannigan with slanted, soft brown eyes. Hannigan moved along and pretended to be interested in a fruit and vegetable window next door. People were busy along the street. Women fought over the counter of the fruit and vegetable store. A furniture man came out of the store across the street and started giving soundless, vivid instructions to his window decorators inside. Hannigan watched him as he ordered a curtain to the left, a chair to the right.

A coupe drew up and a frowsy headed woman got out and hurried toward Ting Sun Fu's.

Shadow trouble evidently wasn't limited to Sheila Mann and himself, Hannigan thought a little grimly. This stout, unhappy looking dame almost ran until she reached the door of Ting Sun Fu's. Then, she relaxed, let her hand rest momentarily on the handle of the door, and went in. Her shadow had been as completely careless of its actions as his own. This made number three. Hannigan wondered if there were any more.

He took a small book from his pocket, entered the license number of the coupe in it, put the book away with shaking

hands and went around the corner to breakfast.

AT NINE-THIRTY he was back, but this time he didn't dare hang around in front of the store. He had a feeling that a dragon might shoot its head out the door at any moment and cook him to a tender brown with one blast of flame.

He found a spot in the shade across the street near the furniture window. The day was clear, and he could see the shadows of people who passed on the opposite side of the street. The shadows, growing shorter as the sun mounted into the sky, touched the front of Ting Sun Fu's.

Hannigan glanced at his watch. Ten o'clock sharp. A police car crept into the block and slowly made its way down the far side of the street. Hannigan knew the uniformed men in the car. Two cops from the First Street Station.

A tall, heavy set man in a dark business suit was ambling along the sidewalk, a companion on either side of him. His clothing was very good. His face, dark and not unpleasant, was pock-marked and a little grim at the moment.

"Jerry Warner," Hannigan said half aloud.

Jerry Warner, big time one-man-crime-wave, protected by a dozen crack lawyers and five or six gunmen, was followed in every move he made by the cops, who now made it a business of staying within fifty yards of Warner day and night, rain or shine.

Jerry Warner, rough-spoken king of the rackets, was number four of the Wrong-Way-Shadow Club. Hannigan whistled softly and wiped beads of sweat from his nose. A nice, cozy bunch—high society girl, gangster, newspaper reporter and a dame with the license number D-640-222. How many more? He wondered.

"CLAMFACE" BAILEY got his nickname because of the totally unresponsive way he stared at people while they were emptying their hearts and their trade secrets to him. The name Clamface had nothing to do with his nature, however, for he talked fast and pleasantly. It was just that he "looked" the way a clam "sounds"—silent and locked within himself. You could never tell whether an earthquake or a five-alarm fire was affecting him little or not at all—that is, not until he started talking.

He listened to Hannigan patiently for ten minutes. Then he said, "Get off that desk. We're going down for a drink."

He slipped the eyeshade from his creased forehead, and they went down the long line of desks. In the corridor, he placed one arm around Hannigan's shoulder. He tried to act fatherly, but it was a little hard because he was short and his arm wouldn't reach far.

"How long you been feeling this way?" he asked abruptly.

Hannigan stopped. "See here, if you think I'm bats . . ."

Bailey shook his head sadly. "I'm a fair man," he said patiently. "I give everyone a chance. We are going to walk the half block to Sam's, where we will partake of a glass of weak spirits and a ham sandwich with mustard. During that walk, your story will have ample time to prove or disprove itself. Someone once wrote a song, 'Me and My Shadow,' and it seems that the lyric went to your head." Bailey started humming the song softly.

They reached the street. Bailey's arm dropped at his side. He said, "Well, here is the sunshine, and what —"

HE STOPPED talking and clamped his jaws together tightly. His

shadow pointed East. It was five in the afternoon. Hannigan's pointed directly West, like an arrow marking the direction of the sun.

Bailey didn't say anything. He just stared ahead and Hannigan could almost feel Bailey's reluctance to accept what he was seeing with his own eyes.

They moved gratefully into the twilight of Sam's heavily shuttered bar and found a booth. Hannigan could smell one of Sam's everpresent hams sending up rich odors from the stove in the kitchen. Sam was laying out white slices of bread and spreading them thickly with butter. He came over, grinning, the knife in his hands.

"Mr. Bailey, Mr. Hannigan. White or rye, and how many?"

"White," Hannigan said, "with lots of lean meat and two bottles of beer."

Sam nodded and waited for Bailey to speak. After a while he said, "White or rye, Mr. Bailey?"

Clamface Bailey was staring at the wall. He said, "Huh?" Then, "Oh, just a beer, Sam. I—I guess I'm not hungry."

Sam's jaw dropped. He felt personally insulted. "The ham is good, Mr. Bailey. New one. Smoked it six months ago. It's—"

"I know," Bailey interrupted grimly. "Your ham is always good. I'm just not hungry."

Sam wandered away, crestfallen. This was the first time in seven years that Clamface Bailey had lost his appetite.

Bailey looked at Hannigan. "What we going to do about it?"

Hannigan shrugged. "I came to you because you always know the answers."

Bailey was quiet for a while. Then he stood up. "Never mind the ham," he said. "It's clear as a crystal what we've got to do. Every one of the people who has a screwy shadow goes to see Ting Sun Fu. What are we waiting

for? He's the man to answer our question."

IT WAS just six o'clock when Bailey and Bob Hannigan left a cab opposite Ting Sun Fu's and started across the street. The sidewalks were overflowing with the usual assortment of pretty office girls and tired looking clerks. Buses and cabs roared, chugged and blasted their horns at each other.

Bailey stopped short halfway across the street and grasped Hannigan's arm. Hannigan was jerked back just in time to avoid being run over by the green sedan that roared down the street.

"Jeez!" Bailey's cry was cut short by the sudden staccato hail of bullets that tore from the speeding auto.

Across the street, in front of Ting Sun Fu's, a man cried out in pain and slumped forward on the pavement. A girl, young, panic-stricken, started to run around in circles screaming at the top of her voice and holding a bloody hand. One of the bullets had clipped her wrist. Suddenly, the whole mass of shouting humanity along the street paused, hesitated and swept toward Ting Sun Fu's.

"Come on," Bailey said. "This is gonna be . . ." His voice was drowned by the throng as he rushed forward. Hannigan was close behind him.

Together, they fought their way through the crowd around the body on the sidewalk. Hannigan saw the body first, and a queer chill shot through him. The slain man was Jerry Warner.

A burly cop was shouting, "Get back there. Keep moving. This ain't no picnic. Get moving."

"Get on the phone," Bailey told Hannigan. "We got time to stick in new headlines for the late edition."

BECAUSE he was trained to work fast, Hannigan didn't hesitate. He

rushed past the enraged cop who tried to push him back, and on into Ting Sun Fu's novelty shop. He was vaguely aware of two or three clerks and a very old Chinese gentleman grouped near the door.

"Telephone," he said quickly, then saw it, a coin model mounted at the end of a counter. He slipped a nickel from his pocket and dialed. As he waited for the *Telegram* to answer, he was aware of a police siren outside and of a lot of people creating the loud, disturbing sound that a mob makes when it is trying to pass on knowledge by word of mouth.

Clayton on the re-write desk said, "*World Telegram*. Who is it?"

"Hannigan." The reporter spoke hurriedly. "Tell Speed Williams to hold the presses. Bailey wants a banner lead. Make it 'JERRY WARNER DIES.' Here's the dope. Warner was shot five minutes ago in front of Ting Sun Fu's novelty shop on Larrent Street. Play up a mysterious green sedan that opened up on Warner with a submachine gun. Get photographers and men down here for more story. Make it good."

He could hear Clayton's pencil scap-ing, then, "Okay. Good news. Warner getting bumped, I mean. He's one of the lowest—"

Hannigan hung up. He pushed his way past the group at the front of the store and into the street. A police ambulance was parked at the curb. A half dozen cops had made a small circle around the spot where Warner was shot. Warner's two henchmen were dragging him toward the ambulance. The toes of his shoes scraped the sidewalk.

Hannigan forgot the crowd; he didn't hear Bailey speaking to him. In the slanting rays of sun that touched the outer side of the sidewalk, two shadows were thrown on the white panel of the

police ambulance. Two shadows pointing to the East, and Jerry Warner's shadow still pointing West.

TING SUN FU stood behind the counter. He studied Bob Hannigan with quiet, interested eyes. Ting's face was wrinkled and brown. It was devoid of hair and resembled very old leather, washed many times by the sun and the wind. He wore a round, silk hat of blue, and his body was covered with a robe, with a huge dragon of many colors twisting itself around and around the robe.

Ting Sun Fu spoke in a gentle, very low voice. "You are gentleman who used our phone this afternoon? You desire more information concerning what I saw on the street?"

Hannigan was in no mood to do word exercises. He wanted to get to the point quickly. "I know what went on in the street, Mr. Fu," he said. "I'm interested in the ones who are left. Warner was only one of us."

"Us?"

The word was hardly more than a whisper. It hissed from Ting Sun Fu's lips. His face didn't change, but his voice expressed amazement.

"It's none of my business, but Sheila Mann came here. A woman named Nora Williams came, also. Warner was the third party. They are the only ones I know so far, beside myself."

He had checked on the Williams woman through her license number. She operated a beauty parlor on Fifteenth Street.

He watched Ting Sun Fu's long fingers. They were more expressive than the man's face. The fingers curled slightly and started to shake. Fu stared at him; ran a slim finger along the top of the showcase, searching for an imaginary bit of dust, and then studied the finger.

"You speak in riddles," he said. "Chinese love riddles only when they can be answered. You mention three names. You link them with me. Why?"

Hannigan leaned over the counter and brought his face very close to Fu's. "Because," he said deliberately, "I stopped to look at your damned collection of knickknacks, and I saw Sheila Mann come in here. There was a very peculiar thing about her, and I'm trained to notice anything odd. Her shadow was, shall we say, behaving oddly."

Fu's expression didn't change. It betrayed nothing. "So?"

"When I left the front of the shop, my shadow had also changed. In other words, Fu, I've picked up a backward shadow, and I'm in no mood to carry it around the rest of my life. I want to know how come? I think you have the answer."

THE store was very quiet. Ting Sun Fu backed away from him slowly, studying him from head to foot. A slow smile touched his lips and wrinkled his mouth. "So? I think, Mr. Hannigan," he pronounced the name slowly, "you and I have something to discuss. First, I suggest you take a short walk. When you return, I shall be in my office."

Hannigan knew why he must leave the store. He grinned. "Don't worry," he said. "Proof is something I can give you fast, and I wish I couldn't."

He wheeled around and went to the door. He heard Fu's feet patter lightly behind him. He went out into the sunlight and walked across the street. The shadow followed him, slipping silently along over the cement, pointing toward the sun. He turned when he reached the opposite side of the street and saw Ting Sun Fu at the door, nodding his head. Then Fu disappeared into the

darkness of the store, and Hannigan went back across the street.

A Chinese clerk met him as he went in, bowed slightly and turned to move along the rows of delicate glassware toward the rear of the establishment. Hannigan followed. His heart pounded so hard that it gave him a headache. His fists were clenched and the palms were wet with perspiration.

The clerk stopped at a large, beautifully carved door, and knocked lightly. He pushed the door open and Hannigan entered.

The room was Ting Sun Fu's office, and blinds, drawn tight, hid the daylight which normally would be coming in from the alley. Ting Sun Fu was seated on a low divan, legs crossed, hands resting in his lap.

He waited until Hannigan crossed the deeply carpeted floor and stood before him. Hannigan stared around him in amazement. He might have walked across the threshold into another world. The office was at least twenty feet square, and nowhere in it could he find a desk, a phone, or any of the necessities used by business men. The walls were like paper, painted with lovely scenes of distant mountains, multi-colored birds and green gardens. The carpet reflecting warmth and color, was soft enough to sleep upon. Divans, low chairs and several small tables overflowing with flowers, completed the scene.

"You are enchanted," Ting Sun Fu said. "You had not expected this?"

Hannigan could only shake his head.

"Only the shadow of the Second Sun allowed you to come here," Ting Sun Fu told him. "No one else is allowed beyond the door."

Hannigan's head started to clear. This was all very nice, but what he wanted was an explanation, not a sales talk about the beautiful room. "Now,



you're going to tell me why—"

TING SUN FU halted him by raising one hand graciously. "The Chinese seem slow in their methods of living, and perhaps in their explanations," he said. "First, we will rest and be refreshed. Then, perhaps you will learn something of the world of the Second Sun."

Hannigan felt laziness creeping over him. While he was here, he supposed, he should at least be polite. He sat down on the edge of the divan. He wondered about Fu's reference to the Second Sun. Probably some Chinese philosophy. If he were to learn the secret of the shadow, he must be polite, careful not to anger the old man.

Fu clapped his hands together sharply. From the side wall, a Chinese girl came. She entered through a small panel which closed at once behind her. She wasn't pretty, but the serene, quiet look on her face made her attractive in that strange way of the Orient. She carried a small tray, and steam emerged into the room from the tall, spigoted, gracefully painted teapot.

She placed a tiny handleless cup before Hannigan and poured it full of dark tea. The aroma was good. Hannigan kept his eyes on the girl. She moved gracefully, without a sound. She did not speak. She poured tea for Fu, who at once picked up the cup and held it carefully with the fingers of both hands. Hannigan lifted his, and they drank. The heat of the tea made him sleepy.

"We should no longer be hidden in this semi-twilight," Fu told the girl. "Open the blinds."

The girl bowed low and went to the rear of the room. Hannigan felt a delightful drowsiness sweeping over him. He watched the girl's long fingers as they touched the cords that controlled the blinds. Then she pulled the cords

and a vast, glittering new world unveiled before him.

THOSE next few seconds were strange to Hannigan. Strange and unreal. Afterward, he could never quite describe them. When the blinds flew upward, he had expected to see the dismal, garbage-filled alley. Instead, a blaze of sun hit his face. Before him, stretched as far as his eyes could see, was a vast, green world. The green was a setting for myriads of colored flowers. Trees, tall, leafy and graceful, made a perfect backdrop for the scene.

Then, the warmth of the tea and, he realized vaguely, something in the tea, made him close his eyes. There was no pain. He opened them again with a struggle, and grinned crookedly at Ting Sun Fu. "Funny . . . I'm sleepy as the devil. Can't . . . seem . . . to . . ."

He saw something then that made his eyes widen with amazement. He had been sitting with his back to the East. The afternoon sun should be sinking into the West. Instead, it was bright and sparkling in this new world, and the sun shone from behind him—from the East.

"The Land of the Second Sun," Fu said. "Later . . . perhaps. . ."

Hannigan felt his head reeling. He tried to hold on.

"You . . . will . . . learn. . ."

The voice wist going far away, over those mountains—where Hannigan couldn't hear it plainly. He leaned forward, clutched at a pillow to hold himself up, then fell into the softness of the divan.

CLAMFACE BAILEY sat on the edge of the bed, a hobgoblin in green pajamas, drinking from the bottle he had drawn from a nook under the mattress. His face was sour as he stared



at Hannigan.

"No, I don't believe it," he said. "I had to believe the shadow, because I saw it. I'll figure out an explanation for it, too, in time."

He paused, took another snort, and continued: "Now, you wake me up in the middle of the night. You went to see Ting Sun Fu, and you had a cup of tea with him, and you walked out into a strange new world full of trees and flowers.

"Are you sure that Chink didn't give you a pipe instead of a cup of tea?"

Hannigan was confused. He had been badly mixed up ever since he awakened, long after dark, in the alley behind Ting Sun Fu's.

"As sure as I've ever been of anything in my life," he said. "Honest to God, Bailey, I'm telling you what happened. Don't crucify me. I'm crazy as a loon already. I don't know what to believe any more."

Bailey's eyes softened a little. He had been awake a half hour now, and was beginning to understand just how bewildered his reporter friend was.

"Okay," he said. "Let's be sensible about this. You see the Land of the Second Sun, whatever that is. Maybe it was a movie on a screen. Maybe it was just the result of hypnotism, or the stuff you drank. Anyhow, you didn't drink tea. You drank a drug strong enough to make you sleep in a back alley for several hours. Now, all you've got is a headache. What am I supposed to do, go out looking for the Land of the Second Sun with you?"

Hannigan nodded. "I hoped you would. I want to go back to Ting Sun Fu's, now, and with someone along to keep an eye on me."

Bailey swore. "I'm damned if I'll—" He stopped short and grinned. "Okay. Anything for a pal. Anyhow, almost anything."

TING SUN FU'S was dark—and the door was locked. Bailey kept an eye on the street, while Hannigan tried some of the keys he carried in his pocket.

Bailey was nervous. "Editor of *Telegram Picked Up for Breaking and Entering*," he chanted softly. "Nice mess we'll be in, Hannigan."

Hannigan didn't answer. He found the right key and the door opened softly. They went back along the line of counters. Hannigan stopped at the rear wall. A huge oriental rug hung in the center, covering the door to Ting Sun Fu's private room. He took the corner of it and drew it aside. In the dimness of the room, he could see the huge door. He used force, but the thing wouldn't give. Suddenly, he kicked it savagely with his foot. The sound was amplified in the quiet shop.

"Take it easy," Bailey told him, "You'll wake up every Chink in the place."

Hannigan wasn't going to give up easily. He started searching for a keyhole. There was none. The door was without a handle or any object to help open it. He turned back toward Bailey, very discouraged.

"Let's get out of here," Bailey decided, "before we start seeing dragons."

They went out and locked the door behind them, walked around the block and up the narrow alley where Hannigan had awakened earlier.

The rear of Ting Sun Fu's shop was constructed of dirty red brick. Two large windows faced this alley. They were covered by tightly drawn blinds, the same blinds that Hannigan had seen open this afternoon. Hannigan studied the windows carefully. He found a door that led to the back room, but it was bolted from the inside. There was no keyhole. The door was made of steel.

Down on his knees, he lit a match. In the thick coal dust and filth of the alley, he could see his tracks leading out the door and along the wall to a couple of ash cans. There, the imprint of his body was clear where he had slept between the cans.

He sighed and stood up. "I need sleep," he said. "Sleep—and time to think more clearly."

"You need a brain specialist," Bailey chuckled, and led the way back toward the street.

"THE CHARM SHOP—Nora Williams, Proprietor" was a neat place, wedged between a barber shop and a restaurant, on Fifteenth Street. It had clean venetian blinds at the windows, a small, oval fronted desk inside and a pretty young girl of sixteen sitting behind the desk. She looked up and smiled at Bob Hannigan as he came in. Hannigan removed his hat.

"I'd like to speak to Miss Williams," he said.

"She's busy at present." The girl smiled. "Was it about an appointment?"

He had a hunch she was laughing at him.

"Not this time," he said. "Guess my permanent will hold up for a while yet. Will you tell Miss Williams it will only take a minute or two. Tell her it's about her shadow."

The girl, who had a nice figure, went back through the curtains that led to the main shop. She stopped before she went out, gave Hannigan a curious stare, then shrugged.

Hannigan smiled. That line about the shadow would sound funny to anyone—anyway, that is, except the Williams woman. He waited. Two minutes passed. He had the feeling that someone was staring at him through the crack in the curtains. Then the recep-

tion girl came out. She motioned Hannigan toward a door at the side of the room.

"Miss Williams' office," she said. "Will you wait for her there? She'll be in shortly."

She waited as he went through the opened door. Then, smiling a little, she said, "I don't get it, but Miss Williams must think her shadow is pretty important. She seemed quite excited."

She closed the door. Hannigan looked around the small stuffy room. He found a rocking chair near a front window and sat down. There were two or three love story magazines, a couple of movie books, and a box of needles and wool, all on the table beside the chair. In the center of the room was a small desk cluttered with opened envelopes and trade magazines. A half dozen pictures cluttered the gray walls. They illustrated hair-do's popular since 1917.

Hannigan sighed. He couldn't get the connection between the sophisticated Sheila Mann and this dowdy woman who ran a second class beauty parlor.

MISS WILLIAMS came in abruptly.

Her face was very red, and she was wiping her hands on a limp towel. She came straight across the room and stood before Hannigan. She seemed frightened.

"You tell Ting Sun Fu that I'm not coming back, and he can't make me," she said. "If he thinks—"

She stopped short. Incredible amazement swept over her face. "You aren't one of his men," she accused. "How did you . . . ?"

Hannigan sat where he was. He extracted a cigarette from his pocket, and offered one to Nora Williams. He noticed the lines on her forehead, the way her heavy body quivered, perhaps with excitement, perhaps with fear.

"Sit down, Miss Williams," he said. He stood up while she slumped into the chair near the desk. He helped her light the cigarette.

"I'm a sucker like yourself," he told her. "My shadow falls in the wrong direction, too."

He watched her eyes narrow slightly. She had better control of herself now. They were both stalling for time, each trying to fathom what the other knew.

"You've been to see Fu?" she asked.

He nodded. "I've seen the Land of the Second Sun," he said in a low voice. "I want to know more about it before I go there myself."

She laughed at him then. Laughed a low, gurgling, sardonic laugh. It grew higher and more forced, until he was afraid she was becoming hysterical. Then she stopped laughing abruptly. "You think you have a choice? You believe you can go, or not, as you choose?"

He remained silent. This was more like it. At last, she was talking.

"Look at me," she said. "Six weeks ago I was a normal, easy-going woman, with a good business, plenty to eat and cash in the bank. I was dumber than hell, but I was happy." She arose and walked to the door. "I don't know why you were chosen," she said sharply. "Nor why you came here. But don't come again."

"You can stay here as long as you please." She was defiant now. "But after you go, don't come back again. I haven't anything to tell you."

She closed the door behind her quietly, leaving Hannigan at the window, staring with puzzled eyes at the street outside.

HE SAT there for some time, pondering her words. At last he stood up, put his hat on slowly and went to the door. He pushed it open, heard a

little cry of surprise on the other side of the door, then a sharp crack of wood against bone. The door was heavy, and he had pushed it harder than he thought.

He looked down to see Sheila Mann, dressed in a tightly fitted green suit, sprawled on the floor. She sat up, her face red with anger, pulled down her skirt hurriedly and struggled to her feet. They stood there facing each other, Hannigan feeling like a clumsy fool.

"Do you," she asked heatedly, "usually open doors with the same force you'd use to kill a prize-fighter in the third round?"

Hannigan said, no, he didn't, and she found room for a tiny smile.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I didn't expect anyone in Nora's office, and you caught me off guard."

She rubbed her knee and grimaced painfully. "I don't make a habit of falling for people," she said. "It seems to me this is the second time you've blocked my progress this week. Aren't you the man I had to walk around to get into the Chinese novelty shop downtown?"

He nodded. "That's why I'm here," he said. "About the novelty shop, I mean." He felt his courage rising. The girl was human, warm and intensely feminine. She had prolonged their conversation and seemed to be enjoying it. "I'd like—that is, it's pretty near lunch time. Could I talk you into eating something with me? I have been pretty rough on you. I'd like to make it up somehow."

Her eyes flashed. He couldn't decide whether they reflected anger, amusement or interest. He felt flushed and uncomfortable.

"You said you came here because of something that happened at Ting Sun Fu's? What was it?" There was an

urgent note in her voice.

Hannigan searched carefully for the right words. He had a chance now to fit Sheila Mann into the rest of the puzzle. He hoped he could do a better job than he had with Nora Williams.

"I haven't heard it for years," he said slowly, "but there's a song that has been running around in my head now until it's driving me crazy."

"A song?"

"Me and My Shadow. Catchy tune, and of current interest, it seems, to quite a number of people, including myself."

She turned pale. "You—aren't . . ."

"Do we go to lunch?" he asked. He looked hurriedly behind her, as though to make sure they were alone.

"We do," she said, and took his arm. Her fingers were shaking, and she leaned against him as though she had needed someone to lean on for a long time.

THE Ham Bone wasn't a high class restaurant. Hannigan often ate here because the small room was spick and span, the food cheap, and the ham was in a class of its own. He hoped that Sheila Mann wouldn't object to the place. He wasn't sure how a girl who had a ten-million-dollar father lived.

To his amazement, she liked it. She acted as though she'd been at home with the common people long before he met her. In ten minutes, he had watched her chew contentedly on small slices of ham, and had been so content to stare at her lips and her deep eyes, and to listen to her pleasant voice, that at last she had to remind him that he hadn't eaten a bite.

They talked about the town, and new name bands, and the fire at the waterfront, and anything but the subject that was uppermost in both their minds. Then, when they had finished eating,

Sheila Mann dropped her gay manner abruptly.

"I know you quite well now, Mr. Hannigan," she said. "You see, I wanted to learn something about you, because I need—a friend. I haven't one at present."

He chuckled. "What about those well dressed dummies you're photographed with every week? The yacht club, polo grounds and the race track."

"We'll let that pass." She frowned. "I'm desperate. That 'Me and My Shadow' gag may have been funny to you, but it isn't to me. You're the first person I've felt I could mention it to, because I think you understand a lot of things that others do not."

"And what gives you that idea? Perhaps I'm just a news hound, guessing at a lot of things, and bluffing to find out the rest."

She smiled, easily this time, and warmly. "That's exactly what you are doing. Guessing and bluffing. However, you overlooked one thing. I've checked up on you."

IT WAS his turn to be puzzled.

"How?"

"On the way here from the beauty shop," she said. "You forget that it's a bright day. I notice that although 'Me and My Shadow' are inclined to act queerly, yours does the same thing. It kept company with us all the way from Nora's."

Hannigan didn't say anything for a full minute. He was thinking hard. The Mann girl was smart. She had made sure of him before she spoke. When he looked up again, she was staring at him with a mixture of fear and confidence in her eyes.

"Bob," she said, "you've got to help me. I need your help. In turn, I'll try to help you."

Hannigan felt his heart swell and

grow warmer. The most beautiful girl he had ever seen, asking him for help.

"I'm a dumb ox," he said. "You'd better go to your real friends if you need advice. I'm a two-bit reporter, rummaging around to find what I can for the headlines. I'm a bad partner. I'd get you into trouble."

Her hand crept across the table and touched his. Her fingers were warm and firm. It wasn't a cheap flirtation. She was sincere—sincere and frightened.

"You're going to turn me down?"

He looked at her—straight—his eyes searching hers. "Do I look like a fool?"

Hannigan couldn't remember when he had been so strangely excited before. It might compare, this quiet meeting, to that time when, during his high school days, he was chosen to take the school's prettiest girl to the prom. It might, but he didn't think so. There was a subtle, easy charm about Sheila Mann that dwarfed every other woman he had ever met. She seemed a combination of perfectly poised society and eager school girl.

**H**E LEFT her with the promise that she would meet him at eight, at the Ham Bone. From there, they would go to Ting Sun Fu's. She was urgent about that. They must go together, and at once. It seemed so important to her that she refused to tell him why until they met again.

Hannigan entered the Ham Bone at seven-thirty. He looked around anxiously, for although Sheila wasn't supposed to be here for another half hour, he had hoped that she would come early.

She wasn't among the small group of diners, so he found a table where he could watch the door, sat down and waited. Seven-fifteen, then eight

o'clock, and no Sheila. For a time, Hannigan blamed her delay on the usual little things that a girl must do before going out. Then, he knew that something was wrong. Sheila Mann wasn't the type to make a promise and break it.

He waited for another half hour, then called her home. It took a lot of courage, because he felt as though he was placing a call to Washington, and he feared talking with Mr. Mann more than he'd fear a conversation with the President.

A formal, gentleman's gentleman voice answered the ring. "This is the Mann residence. Who is calling, please?"

Hannigan mentioned his name, then asked for Sheila.

"Sorry. Miss Sheila left an hour ago. She isn't expected home for several hours. Was there a message?"

He said no, and that he was sorry he hadn't caught Miss Sheila before she left, that maybe he'd try again in the morning. He hung up.

There was only one other place Sheila could be if she didn't come to him. She had gone to Ting Sun Fu's, or worse yet, been taken there against her will.

For some strange reason, he called Nora Williams. He had seen a small room off the office where he interviewed her yesterday. Perhaps she lived there.

But the voice which answered the phone sounded like an old colored woman's. "H'lo. Who's calling?"

"I want to speak to Miss Williams," he said quickly. "Is she there?"

"No sir," the voice said. "Miss Williams, she gone out with a Chinese gentleman. I'm the only one here. I'm Miss Vanity. I do the cleanin'. I'm—"

**H**ANNIGAN had heard enough. He hung up. He slammed his hat on

tightly and went out into the street. There was a Yellow Cab cruising slowly up the other side of the street. He didn't bother to hail it. He sprinted across the street, opened the door while it was still moving and said tersely, "If you've got gas, brother, burn it fast."

The cab driver turned around, amazed at Hannigan's quick entrance, recognized the reporter, and said with a grin, "Well, if it isn't Speedy Hannigan. Where to, newshawk?"

Hannigan recognized the man, too, and gave him quick instructions. Five minutes later, the brakes squealed and the cab halted before Ting Sun Fu's.

Hannigan hadn't thought about the shop being closed, and a deep, unreasonable anger flooded through him when he found it so. He started pounding on the door.

At first there was no response. Then, a cautious head appeared where the curtain was lifted a crack. It was Ting Sun Fu himself who opened the door, holding a thin finger to his lips for silence.

"I want Miss Mann," Hannigan said, and moved in quickly.

Ting Sun Fu backed away from him. "I do not know a Miss Mann. *Tai lai* (lady) has not been in Ting Sun Fu's humble shop."

Hannigan reached out with one hand and grasped the old man by the neck. He was shaking with rage. He kicked the door behind him, slamming it closed. He leaned close to Fu.

"You know nothing about the Land of the Second Sun, either, or how I come to be lying out in the alley behind your shop. Don't kid me, mister. I'm seeing Miss Mann here personally, or your scrawny neck isn't worth an ounce of rice."

FU WENT down to his knees slowly, his eyes glassy. "*Chan-choh*," he

wheezed. "Stop."

Hannigan helped the old man to his feet. They stood there facing each other, Fu stroking his neck, Hannigan trying to puzzle out what he should do next.

"Listen," he said, "I don't usually go around choking old men. You know something about the girl. I've got to find her. You're going to help me."

Fu shrugged. "I wonder. There are times when I wish it were '*tong wang la*' (finish) for me. When I shudder to go on."

He backed away from Hannigan a few steps. There seemed to be no fear in his eyes. No fear, nor anger. That was what had puzzled Hannigan from the first. Ting Sun Fu seemed to be beyond human emotions. He seemed to fit into a master role as a dime store villain, yet he refused to act as a villain should act.

"Mr. Hannigan is very worried about the lady. *Mei-yi fahtzu* (it cannot be helped). Miss Mann has been called by the Ruling Three. Mr. Hannigan is fortunate that he has not been called. He should leave here at once."

Hannigan grinned sardonically.

"I'm leaving—with Sheila Mann." "I'm not leaving until you tell—"

Suddenly, the silence of the shop was shattered by a throaty, terror-filled scream. The sound made Hannigan's blood freeze. It came from the rear of the store, from Fu's office.

With a bound, Hannigan passed Ting Sun Fu and ran toward the sound. He found the rug that covered the wall and whipped it away. He turned to Fu, who had followed him. "You can open this door," he said tensely. "Do it, or by God, I'll kill you, for sure."

The Chinese hesitated, then touched the door with his thin hand. The door flew open. Ting Sun Fu stepped away.

"Enter—and repent," he said. "You

would not listen to me."

Hannigan heard no more. He leaped forward.

**B**EFORE him was the same room he had been in before, and beyond that, where the alley should have been, he saw the beauty of the Land of the Second Sun. It was real, all right. Real, in spite of Clamface Bailey. Real, in spite of the fact that he himself could not find it alone, after that first drug-filled journey.

Near the windows, facing the door that led to the other land, was Sheila Mann. Two strange men held her by the wrists, dragging her away from Hannigan. Even as Hannigan ran toward her, she managed to twist half around and cry out again.

"Bob . . . Bob, help me!" It was a broken, helpless sob.

Then the door opened, and she was dragged through it.

As the men who held Sheila turned to go through the door, Hannigan stopped short, overcome with amazement. A moment ago they had looked quite normal. *Now, viewed from the side, Sheila's captors had no depth, no substance.*

They were like horrible, dancing paper dolls, dragging Sheila away with them. Hannigan tried, but he never quite reached that door. Something, or someone, tripped him, and he went down hard, hitting his head against the floor. He tried to get up, but a great dizziness swept over him. He closed his eyes and shook his head, trying to clear it. When he opened his eyes again, the windows to the Land of the Second Sun were covered by blinds. He was alone in the back room with the aged Ting Sun Fu.

**H**ANNIGAN struggled to his feet. He stood there, arms hanging

loosely at his sides, head forward with chin outthrust. His head felt bad, very bad, but he was angrier than he had ever been before, and the anger helped lessen the effect of the pain. He stared at the plain, wrinkled little old man.

"You're plenty smart, you think, don't you," he said. "You've closed the door to that phony, hypnotic world, and you've destroyed Sheila Mann. Now, you've kept me from following her and you think everything's going to be all right."

Ting Sun Fu shrugged. His face remained expressionless. "I have been forced to bring about certain things," he said simply. "I cannot guess the outcome."

Hannigan took a step forward. "Well, I can," he said roughly. "I know that if I draw those blinds apart, I'll find nothing but the back alley. I also know that Sheila Mann is not in the alley. If you don't take me to her now, I'm going to tear you apart piece by piece, and to hell with your age and dignity."

The room was quiet. Hannigan fidgeted nervously. He had to reach Sheila soon. She had been very frightened.

"Do you help me," he shouted suddenly, "or am I going to tear down the joint?"

**T**HE face of the old man was thoughtful. Hannigan knew that expression would drive him mad. His fists doubled. Ting Sun Fu stepped back one pace.

"*Chan-choh*," he said sharply. "Stop. Do not act like a young fool. This is a problem for men."

"Listen closely," Ting Sun Fu continued. "I can tell you the secret of the other land. I can take you there, but you will regret it. I have tried to save as many as possible. Some had



to go. You could be saved. Once you meet the Ruling Three, your fate is sealed. Do you wish to go and face death, or return to your normal life in safety?"

Hannigan laughed. It was a hard, almost brutal laugh. "Would you desert the girl you loved?"

The Chinese man's voice did not change. "You will go to the Land of the Second Sun, but first you must understand why you go. Sit with me. I must talk to you."

They sat facing each other on the broad low divan. One, an ancient sage of the East, born with patience and steeped in the tradition of living slowly and learning much. The other, a man of the West, impatient, with a driving force that made him push forward against any odds, to rescue the girl he wanted.

Ting Sun Fu's face was a mask that reflected nothing. His fingers, his entire body, became motionless. The slanted eyes were almost closed. "Understand," he said in a monotone, "that you have not been affected by hypnotism. Everything that has happened to you, everything you have seen, has been real."

The voice had a lulling effect on Hannigan's nerves. He found himself relaxing. At last, he was gaining some of the knowledge which he had fought so long and hard to obtain.

"There is a true Land of the Second Sun," Fu went on. "It is a land, or world, in every sense, although perhaps it would not be classed so by our earthly standards. It is a land that is flat, depthless. A land that looks perfectly normal if you are staring straight at it or its people. Viewed from the side, it would be almost nothing. Objects would seem flat and without order or sense. This is because the Land of the Second Sun is squeezed tightly into a space

pocket, hardly wider than the room in which we sit."

HANNIGAN wanted to interrupt. He didn't dare. He couldn't break the spell. He listened attentively.

"For example, picture a huge stage, many miles wide, filled with hundreds of intricate bits of background. Viewed from the theatre, it is a vast world. Viewed from the wings, it becomes a series of flat, colorless bits of wood and cardboard.

"The Land of the Second Sun came into being crushed between space pockets. Hardly wider than the room, by our standards, it seems quite normal to the flattened, paper-like creatures who live within its borders.

"If you go there, you will become as they are."

Hannigan's fists started to ball into tight knots. "Sheila, Miss Mann, has been changed into one of these flat creatures?"

Fu nodded. "She is like a paper shadow, beautiful to look upon but quite without depth. The Ruling Three demanded that she be sent."

Hannigan forgot his anger for a minute. He remembered the shadow that had started all this. The inevitable entering of Fu into the picture. "The Second Sun," he said thoughtfully. "I assume that another sun shines on this strange world. That it is in a different position than our own."

Fu nodded. "A Second Sun, in our own planetary system, but hidden from us by the same space wrinkle that hides the other world," he explained.

"Then, if it is hidden from us, how does it affect certain people? Why did I suddenly find my body ignoring the rays of our own sun and responding to the one in this other world?"

Ting Sun Fu shook his head. "Understand me clearly," he said. "I do not



know all the answers. We of the East are very old, yet there are things that even we do not understand. There was a morning when I, a simple merchant, opened the blinds that should have allowed me to gaze upon the familiar, ugly scene of the alley behind my shop. On this morning, I was amazed to see a fairyland beyond belief. At first, I rubbed my eyes in wonder. For many days, I yearned to open the door and step into this wonderful world that only I knew existed.

"Something warned me that I should leave it alone. That it was a trap."

"At last, even I, who should have been wise, could not resist temptation. Like the first Adam tasting of the fruit, I went into the other world and my body was flattened.

"I became an agent in this world. Through me, they would bring certain earth people to their land. If I promised to be loyal and help them as I was asked, they would return me to earth and restore my normal appearance and life. If I refused . . ."

HIS eyes met Hannigan's and they were filled with mist. "They can be very cruel," he said. Then, more hurriedly, "I returned, promising them aid. This, then, became the entrance to the Land of the Second Sun. I have never questioned their reasoning. They let me know that, from the many people who entered my shop, they would choose a few that they wanted. I was to lure these few to this room and they would do the rest."

He was speaking swiftly now, as though anxious to be rid of the story.

"Once a person saw the Land of the Second Sun, his or her shadow was reversed. The power of that sun outshone our own."

He arose. "I have served them well, though not proudly. The men and

women who came to me went to the Land of the Second Sun. Perhaps I should not hold my own life so dearly. Yet, I am not entirely a criminal, for they have promised that no harm will come to those who do as they are told."

Hannigan was on his feet, wondering how much of this wild tale he could believe. "Then what about me?" he demanded. "I want to enter that other world. I have a wrong way shadow. I've been chosen. Send me."

Ting Sun Fu shook his head slowly.

"When I was ready to send you the first night you came here, they refused to accept you. You recall, I'm sure, that you went through the door and awakened in the alley."

Hannigan remembered it clearly enough. Remembered how he had tried to convince Clamface Bailey that he hadn't been dreaming or partaking the pleasures of the pipe.

He was watching Ting Sun Fu closely now, a plan growing slowly in his mind. Would it be possible to slip into the Land of the Second Sun despite Ting Sun Fu?

THE blinds were drawn, but the doorway leading to the Land of the Second Sun was open a crack. He could still see the dazzling brilliance of the backward sun. The contact had not yet been lost.

"You do not think that they will harm Sheila Mann?"

"I know nothing of their plans," Fu said. "Who would imagine that they would choose a man of Warner's type. He was bad, all bad. If he had not been murdered by his own gangsters, he would now be in the other world. The Ruling Three demanded him, and are now looking for another of his kind."

"The Ruling Three aren't too fussy whom they pick," Hannigan said. His

body was tense. He could feel his leg muscles tightening automatically. "They shouldn't object to me."

Before Fu could stop him, he was past the little man, through the doorway and over its threshold into the Land of the Second Sun.

For a moment, he felt as though a huge roller had hit him head on, and he went down, falling backward, flat on his back. The door and the windows were gone. There was no Ting Sun Fu, no normal world. Intense agony crept into his body. Every inch of flesh, every bone and muscle, was wrenched and tortured. He lay flat, panting and trying to keep breathing. The pain grew worse, until he was sure that he couldn't stand it. Then, as suddenly as it had come, the pain was gone, and he felt normal once more. He was lying on his back, staring up at an intensely blue sky. He tried to get up, failed to make it, then lay back again, taking it more easily. After a while, with a grim smile on his face, he tried again.

This time, he managed to get his feet under him, but it wasn't easy.

It was going to take some adjusting, he thought, to ready himself for this new world. He had asked for it when he stepped out of Ting Sun Fu's office, and he had certainly gotten the full treatment.

HE LOOKED down at himself a little ruefully. He would have to find Sheila, and he would have to arrange a meeting with the Ruling Three if he could ever find them.

Although he felt quite normal now, and appeared so from the front, Hannigan guessed that he must be about as thick as heavy tissue paper.

He stood in the center of a pretty field. Grass and bright flowers grew in profusion about him. They were real enough, he knew, from the pleasant

odor and the manner in which they waved in the warm breeze. Real, but not in the sense that things were real on earth.

He had to learn to move, to exist, even to change his manner of thinking, if he planned to invade the Land of the Second Sun. He stared around him with growing wonder. After the pain of changing was once over, he felt entirely normal once more. He moved his arm about in front of him.

He remembered words, vague words, spoken before he had come here. "The Land of the Second Sun is like a huge stage. From the front, it seems normal and perfect. From the side, it is flat, paper thin, a vast land squeezed into a narrow space."

Yet, was that explanation correct? On the surface, it seemed so. There was more to it than that, however. Somehow, this land had been subjected to terrific pressure. Pressure had squeezed it into a small space wrinkle. A wrinkle no wider than the alley behind Ting Sun Fu's. To compensate for that wrinkle, the people of this land were also made flat and shadowlike, so that they could move forever like shadows on a wall, and never reach the borders of their narrow land.

Hannigan started to move about. He seemed to move normally. It was as though he could move East and West, but could never hope to penetrate the mysteries of North and South.

THUS far he understood few of the mysteries of this land. It was certainly impossible to return to Ting Sun Fu's, for the room was gone and he had no knowledge of how to search for it. This meadow—bright, flat, lovely in the morning air—seemed a long way from his goal. He saw a forest in the distance and started to walk toward it. The sun left his shadow on the trees

near the edge of the wood, and the shadow was tall and unnatural.

Hannigan tried desperately to think of a plan to save Sheila Mann. How could he save her, before he even knew what fate lay in store for her?

He was tiring easily, because, though his body seemed light as a shadow, the terrific punishment it had taken had weakened him considerably. He found a path through the forest. He realized that one could hardly call it a path. It was more like the opening between two stage flats, for looking sidewise all he saw was a series of flat props. He looked ahead again, to reassure himself, and the forest and the fields looked as he was used to them.

He wondered how he looked, drifting along, flat as a pancake, yet alive and seemingly in perfect health. It might be funny, he thought, if I had any idea how I could get out of this mess when I've had enough of it.

Once, he heard voices ahead. Hardly knowing how to hide, he chose a large tree and flattened himself against it. Five men came down the trail, past the spot where he hid. They were, viewed from his hiding place, quite normal appearing. Their dress was simple. Long, loosely knitted robes of a blue material and flat sandals. As they passed him, they became thin flat shadows, almost colorless, out of a crazy-quilt stage.

He went on again, alert, waiting for another alarm. The path widened, and at last became a pleasant, fairly wide foot road. Ahead of him, springing into sight from nowhere, was a town. He was in it before he realized, for the thin, depthless homes had looked no different than had the forest, until he was among them and viewing them from the proper perspective.

HE HAD no choice now but to keep on moving forward, ignoring the

curious children and older people who came to their doors to stare at him.

The homes were simple, thatched affairs, made of white, lime-like material and covered with straw. Adults and children wore robes, blue, white, pale green or soft brown.

Somewhere, close by, a voice shouted hoarsely, excitedly. Hannigan gritted his teeth. If he started to run, they would overcome him at once. Maybe he could bluff his way through. He looked to both sides of the street and saw more of the flat houses, looking like scenes cut from wall board. A child, flitting into his line of vision and out again, by turning quickly sidewise, tripped him and sent him sprawling in the dust. He got to his knees and brushed the dust from his clothing. People were laughing at him. Hannigan was confused.

People were closing in about him as he went forward down the street. He watched larger homes appear. He knew that he was in some sort of a city now for, as he went along, high buildings appeared, flat as the small houses but built of huge stone blocks and rearing stubbornly, stolidly, up toward the sky.

There was a mob about him now. The children were the worst. They treated him like a strange beggar visiting their streets. They had a clever, devilish trick of sidling up to him, their thin sides exposed and almost impossible to see. Then, they would whirl around suddenly, strike at him or kick him and sidle away again, flat, nearly invisible shadows that flitted out of range before he could fight back. The sounds of their voices were loud and tangled so that he could not understand the words. The older ones closed in about him.

"Two can play that trick," Hannigan whispered to himself. His lips were dry and his throat felt dusty and full

of fuzz. He didn't mind admitting to himself that he was plenty scared.

HE TURNED a full circle suddenly, and sprinted for the side of the street and the doorway of one of the buildings. The move was made too quickly, for what had appeared flat, suddenly became full and natural in appearance, and what had been natural was suddenly flattened by the new angle he had made in turning. Dizzily, he tried to catch himself, headed for the door and dashed in, slamming it behind him.

He was aware of a shadow, turning slowly, until it became a lovely girl who frowned at him in a puzzled manner. The voices in the street arose to a howl of protest.

He had outwitted them for an instant, for he had turned and run so quickly that each person saw only part of him, and no one had a clear idea of where he had gone.

He was panting with fear.

The girl did not look unkind. She might have been out of the line-up at the Fifth Street Theatre, for her garment was made up briefly of a crepe-like stuff that covered her breasts and thighs. She had been bathing, for steam rose from a pink tub placed in the center of the room. A half dozen other tubs, all empty, were scattered about the room.

She cried out, as though it had taken a moment for her to realize what had happened, "What are you doing here? No man enters the bath house, ever."

She found her robe, a rough, soft texture of pink, and slipped into it. The last bit of glowing flesh disappeared under the fabric.

Hannigan said, "They're after me. I've got to get away."

He watched the girl's face carefully, seeing the dark black eyes that traveled

slowly over his face, her high, pink forehead, the carefully combed, still wet tresses that clung to her soft throat and shoulders.

Her eyes were warm. "You are an outsider?"

He nodded. No use lying to her. "I must see the Ruling Three," he said quickly. "I deserve protection until my mission is finished."

THAT sounded impressive enough, and it had the desired effect. He had that astonishing experience of seeing the girl whirl about the room, now normal, now thin and shadowlike. She threw her robe from her and he caught it.

"Into the tub," she said, and pushed him toward one of the tubs in the room. Hannigan swore under his breath. He climbed in and sat down, and pulled the robe over his head. He barely had time.

Someone was pounding on the door. "Go away," the girl cried. "This is the bath."

A loud, grating voice shouted, "We search for a stranger. We must come in. He is hidden close by."

The girl stood before the tub, her brief garment hiding little, her hands on her lips. Her jaw was stubborn. "You cannot enter. We are bathing."

Hannigan heard the door grate open, and ducked under the robe. Then the door slammed shut again, quickly, and the girl cried out in indignation, "The Ruling Three will hear of this."

The voice outside the door was humble and forlorn. "We did not realize. Our deepest apologies."

The girl was not content. She was a perfect actor. "You will be even more chagrined when the Ruling Three call Council." While she scolded, she came to Hannigan and snatched the robe from him. In a moment, she was once

more wrapped snugly inside it. She motioned him out of the tub, continuing her chatter to the unseen man outside.

She took Hannigan's arm and moved toward the rear of the room. Hannigan was growing accustomed to the strange optical changes that took place. The room seemed flat, then full, depending on the way he viewed it. The girl changed from a shadow to a full-sized, red blooded girl, then back to a shadow again.

SHE pushed open a small rear door.

Beyond it was a sunlit courtyard and a small, half-moon shaped vehicle on three wheels. She opened the door and pushed him inside.

"On the floor," she said. "They will not see you there."

The courtyard was deserted. Hannigan guessed that it led to the street behind the bathhouse. Then, the girl was in the car, and her fingers touched the controls. He dared not look up. He crouched close to the floor and felt the momentum of the car as it swept out into a wide circle and shot ahead. The motor was purring smoothly.

"You search for the Ruling Three?" Her voice was softer now, and quite calm.

"I do," Hannigan said. "I happened into this land by accident. I'd like to go back, but I don't know the way. If I could see the right people, perhaps they'd release me."

The girl was silent for a while. Then the car stopped. "You are quite safe now," she said. "Follow me as I leave the car. If we meet anyone, say nothing and keep moving. I will explain your presence."

He had constantly marvelled at her presence of mind and the cool authoritative manner in which she handled everything. He got out of the car, star-

ing ruefully down at his soiled and torn clothing. They were once more shielded from the street by a high wall. Before them was a tall, slim shaft of a building constructed of pink stone, with a huge door which led into its base.

Hannigan followed this girl who had saved him. She walked swiftly to the door, never looking back. He followed and waited without speaking while she opened the lock on a thin silver chain around her neck, and removed a tiny, fork-shaped key hanging from it. She rapped the key sharply against the solid rock of the door and a single, bell-like sound greeted his ears. The key must have started a series of bells inside, for the sound grew louder and the door started to open, inch by inch, with each echo of the original sound. Then, he was staring down a long, narrow corridor. No doors marred the surface of the stone. It was like walking into an endless tunnel cut through solid rock.

The door closed after them. Together, they went along the corridor. At last, as though she had counted each stone they passed since they entered, she stopped. Facing the wall, with no visible object to guide her, she rapped sharply again with the forked key. And again, the bell was heard, and the sound grew in volume, and a second door was opened.

SHE motioned him inside.

Hannigan halted just inside the threshold. This was a wonderful place. He had grown so accustomed to flat surfaces now, that he ignored them. He saw ahead of him a huge pink bed, as large as his entire room at the hotel. Soft, colorful chairs filled this room, and a vast fireplace warmed it. It was like stepping into a huge house all contained in one room.

"I didn't expect anything like this.

I can't stay here. This is your room."

She nodded. She crossed the floor and perched daintily on the edge of the bed. A slow smile covered her face and made her teeth appear brilliantly white and appealing. He thought he had never seen such perfect surroundings.

"I have every right to bring you here," she said. "I like you very much."

He felt uneasy. "If you'll tell me where to find the Ruling Three," he said, "I'll stop troubling you. You've done enough."

She shook her head, still smiling, and he saw stubbornness in the smile now. "You will see the Ruling Three at the proper time," she told him. "Until then, you must do exactly as I tell you."

Hannigan was puzzled. Puzzled and greatly worried. Under ordinary circumstances, he might be quite flattered at her attention. Right now, he wanted to find Sheila Mann. Wanted to get out of this madhouse of flat surfaces.

"I'll cooperate in any way I can," he said stiffly. "I owe you a lot."

She nodded. "That is better. You see, I am not accustomed to helping strangers. I have been content, until now, to remain quite alone. You chose to intrude at a most delicate time. I—I liked it. I've never been quite so touched emotionally. No man has ever been able to thrill me before, and I'm not going to release the first one who does."

"I'm flattered," he said. "Not every man can boast of attracting the attention of so beautiful a girl."

SHE colored prettily. "A nice speech," she said. "The nicest speech that has ever been made to the daughter of the Ruling Three."

Hannigan felt his brain reeling. "The—the . . ." He stopped trying to speak. Words would not come.

A peal of silvery laughter suddenly escaped her lips. She fell back on the bed. "So you wish to see the Ruling Three? I warn you, you'll be quite unpleasantly surprised. You had better linger here until you are quite sure that your decision to meet them cannot be changed. You may regret it."

She stopped laughing as suddenly as she had started and sat up once more. She wrapped her robe more closely about her and looked at him with mock sternness.

"Am I so ugly that you cannot stand to be here long with me?" Her voice was gay, and yet there was a pitiful quality to it, as though grave doubts arose in her mind.

Hannigan was still too overcome to speak. He found his way to a huge cushioned chair, and sank into it. He continued to stare at her for some time.

"Well?" She stood up and moved toward him swiftly, stopping before him with arms outstretched. "You would rather go away?" He saw tears in her deep eyes.

"I—I don't know what to say," he faltered. "Can't you understand? I've been tossed into a strange world. I came here with definite plans. I hoped to meet the Ruling Three because I knew I needed their help. I met you. You're . . . not included in my plans."

"Then I am attractive?"

She said it so gravely that he couldn't help smiling. She arose and came closer to him. Her arms were outstretched. This was an amazing experience to Hannigan. He knew that the girl was only a thin shadow, and that he also was a shadowy form. Yet, his arms creeping about her had the sensation of warm, solid flesh. And his lips on hers were vibrant.

Suddenly, the vision of Sheila Mann rose before Hannigan. Sheila, crying out for him, begging him to save her.

He drew away from the girl, slowly, so that he would not anger her. Suddenly, his eyes halted on the strand of silver, the tiny forked key hanging against her throat where she had replaced it.

He had to get that key. The key was his escape, and Sheila's escape.

His arms went around her. His fingers touched the key, twisted and broke the narrow silver chain and she cried out, "You—you pinched my throat. You hurt me."

He had the key palmed in his hand. "I'm sorry," he said awkwardly.

Her fingers went slowly to her throat. Her eyes widened and tears came.

"YOU stole the key." She jumped to her feet. To his surprise, she didn't seem angry. There was only deep hurt on her face. "You did all that, kissed me tenderly, so that you might steal the key."

Her voice became stern. "You wish to see the Ruling Three?"

He nodded, knowing that he was caught, feeling like a fool to betray her in such a manner.

"Then," she said, "you shall see them. I am very sorry for you, man of another world. Sorry for myself, also, for I would have given much to have had your love."

She moved across the room, and he watched her with dull, wondering eyes. He had never felt so much like a dog before. The girl was a sport, a real sport. She could have had him killed but, instead, she was going to give him a chance.

She reached the wall and drew aside a small curtain that hung against it. Behind the curtain was a small silver wheel. She grasped the wheel and turned it once. Into the room came the rich, full sound of many bells. Bells that he had heard before each time a door opened. This time, the sound

was so loud that it drowned out everything else, and made his ear drums vibrate with pain.

The entire wall of the room slipped up and vanished into the ceiling. Without moving, without leaving his chair, he faced another room, larger than the one they had occupied.

Far away, perhaps a hundred yards, was a platform covered with rich, crimson cloth. On the platform were three thrones, ebony black, with three columns of light that came from above and focused on the thrones.

His eyes adjusted themselves slowly. A man sat on the first throne. He sat motionless. His face was graven. Where his eyes should have been, there were only small, black holes.

HANNIGAN grasped the arms of his chair and held on tightly. He felt his blood pound through his veins. He tried not to cry out or show fear. *The eyeless man on the first throne was Ting Sun Fu.*

On the second throne, there was a small, black cushion. Laying on that cushion, sparkling and alive, were the two slanted eyes of Ting Sun Fu.

On the third throne, there was nothing. Nothing? Well, nothing that the eye could see, Hannigan decided. But there was something there which was invisible to the human eye, something that could not be seen, could only be felt. Like the slight mist of a soul, or of a mind. Perhaps the fog of a brain, able to think but unable to make its presence known to the eye.

"These," the girl said in a strained voice, "are the Ruling Three."

Hannigan's hand clutched the pronged key lightly. Sweat stood out on his forehead. "Ting Sun Fu," his voice didn't sound like his own, it was harsh, out of control. "I might have guessed."

Ting Sun Fu nodded slowly. The eyes, laying naked on their black cushion, twinkled. And from the empty third throne, came Ting Sun Fu's voice.

"How could you have known that a lowly shopkeeper was also the power of a great world? You speak riddles, Mr. Hannigan. You have been most troublesome, even when I tried to save you from your own fate. Now, you have hurt my daughter, and you have sealed your doom once and for all."

*"Now you have hurt my daughter."*

Hannigan forgot Ting Sun Fu and turned startled eyes upon the girl. She was tall and willowy, beautifully formed. Her eyes were not slanted. Her color was not yellow. How could she be the daughter of the Oriental?

"All this must be confusing to you." Ting Sun Fu chuckled. "Rise and come closer."

Hannigan stood up. He moved forward, like a man in his sleep, entering some weird, nightmarish place. He crossed the carpet into the strange room. Shadows followed him, closed in about him. At last, all he could see was the three lighted thrones: with the man, the eyes and . . . the soul.

HE HALTED finally, about ten feet from the thrones. A strange panic filled him but he tried not to betray his feelings. He stood there, arms on his hips, legs wide apart, defiant.

"I have no quarrel with you," Fu said softly. "If you had remained on earth, you would have lost your strange shadow in a few days. No one would ever have troubled you again."

Hannigan was conscious of the forked key, still resting in the damp palm of his hand. He slipped it into his pocket.

"What about Miss Mann?" he asked grimly. "Would she have returned if I hadn't come for her?"

He heard a gasp behind him and re-

membered the girl, the daughter of the Ruling Three.

Ting Sun Fu remained patient, unbearably calm. "Nothing you have done, or possibly can do, will change Miss Mann's future," he said. "She was brought here for a purpose."

"To be tortured and—"

Ting Sun Fu interrupted him with an upraised arm. Hannigan found himself staring into the black, cavernous holes in Fu's head, fascinated, almost hypnotized.

"I will explain something to you," Fu said. "I don't know why. I have no reason to, except that in a way I am responsible for your being in this embarrassing situation."

"The shadow?" Hannigan asked. Fu nodded. "Many years ago, I studied the mystic science in my home province. I came close to finding many new worlds. Worlds within worlds, locked in space pockets, and lost from ordinary eyes.

THE Land of the Second Sun is only one of many. Like very high pitched sound is locked from normal ears, so other worlds lie about us, above and below, hidden from but a fortunate few who are developed highly enough to recognize them.

"I came to America, always dreaming of finding one of these worlds. Of becoming a ruler. Then, one day, I discovered the secret. I produced a key."

He took a two-pronged silver key from his robe and held it aloft. Hannigan caught his breath. It was a duplicate of the key in his pocket.

"The key was pitched to a very special height," Fu said. "I tapped many walls and secluded nooks, and at last found a doorway to this place from my very room behind the shop.

"When I first came here, the Land of the Second Sun was an odd place in-



deed." A ghost of a smile flitted across his old face.

"There were three phases of life here," he said. "The eyes, as you see them beside me, floating around, unable to work for anyone. The bodies, flattened, and without a will or the ability to work or think." He sighed.

"Third and last, the souls, floating like lost wraiths among the hills and forests of the land. I was their savior. I am not without knowledge of such things. China is a land steeped in mystery and mysticism. After many years, I was able to combine the three parts into a whole. Many people died, but at last there grew a race of strong ones to replace them. People normal in every respect but for their unnatural flatness."

Hannigan felt a presence at his side. He turned and saw the Princess staring at him with misty eyes. He scowled.

"Listen," Fu said, quite sternly, and Hannigan looked back again at the three thrones. "I could not change the flatness of the people, for this space wrinkle is very narrow. They could not live in it if they were normal, according to earth standards.

"But, despite that, I have achieved my purpose. I am the ruler of the world. There was only one thing I had to do for them in return. One strange custom persisted here. The people worship me, but they insisted that I, as a symbol of the land, must divide myself into their original three parts. They insisted that I rule as a god, not as a human. To do this, I must represent what this land once was, a place of separated people, a people who had three parts.

"**N**OTHING is impossible. It was difficult to divide myself thus, but you will remember that I had already placed three parts of a body to-

gether and made complete units. Thus, I was able to divide myself into three parts—the Ruling Three."

"That's all very pretty," Hannigan said. "I wouldn't believe it, but I'm seeing it, and I have to believe what I see. What of me? What of the Second Sun that managed to get itself into my everyday life?"

Fu said nothing for a long time. His eyes glittered, and there was boiling activity in the mist over the third throne. Then he spoke again, "The Second Sun pierced the space between this world and yours," he said. "It shines through only when the windows and the door of this land are open. Whoever it touches, it marks for the period of a week." He shrugged. "I called people to my shop who would be helpful here. They saw the Land of the Second Sun through the windows. The sun touched them and their shadow was changed."

"I hadn't been in your shop when I was affected," Hannigan protested.

Fu's face was a mask. "You lingered by the window," he said. "The sun, released through it, touched you. It was not visible, but the power was great." He shrugged again, and made an idle gesture in the air. "If you had not stopped by the window that day, you would never have known."

Hannigan's mind shot back suddenly to Sheila Mann. "You still haven't told me what happened to Sheila Mann, and the others," he said stubbornly.

Fu arose slowly from the chair. As he did so, the eyes, two small orbs of light, lifted into the air with him and hovered close to his face. The mist on the third throne shifted upward and hung over his head.

"Sheila Mann came to my shop to purchase a rare cup," Ting Sun Fu said softly. "I recognized her great beauty. In Nora Williams, I saw a chance to

produce beauty culture here. In Sheila Mann, the perfect sample for Miss Williams to work from. And so, both were chosen. They tried to escape us, but my agents are experts in the use of hypnotics. When the time came, these women were met by my agents and forced to accompany them to my office. From there . . ."

"Our third choice, the gangster who was shot in the street, was to be a model of strength for our men. Unfortunately . . ."

"What happened to Sheila?" Hannigan said it through clenched teeth. His nerve was breaking. If Ting Sun Fu didn't take him to the girl soon . . .

"I WILL do better than tell you," Fu said. "You shall be shown."

Ting Sun Fu moved across the room, away from the thrones, away from Hannigan and the girl, the eyes and the misty soul following him. He reached the far wall, and tapped it gently with the silver key. The wall slipped away and the bells tolled behind it. Then, Hannigan was staring into another huge chamber. A chamber filled with flitting, shadow-thin people. He saw Sheila Mann, and a hoarse cry came from his throat.

Sheila was lying as in death, stretched full-length on a cushioned divan. People moved about her, carrying what appeared to be sketch books. It was like some sort of weird art school, a studio for the shadow people of the Land of the Second Sun.

Sheila, alive or dead, did not move. Hannigan sprang forward, but stopped short as Fu turned to face him.

"Do not fear," Fu said. "She is alive and well. They do not harm her. She is the model of beauty for the people of this world."

Hannigan, relieved for the moment, was more puzzled than ever.

"You see, Mr. Hannigan, you do not fit into this world. You have no talent, nor are you handsome or noticeably strong. You can offer nothing to our culture. I say that so you will know why it was not my wish to have you here."

Hannigan grinned wryly. "Then there's no reason for keeping me," he said. "Miss Mann can leave as soon as your people are done feasting their eyes upon her. I can leave, because I'm not useful in any sense. Is that correct?"

Fu's eyes, floating about, seemed to halt and focus on him. They narrowed calculatingly.

"UNFORTUNATELY," Fu said, "once you have entered this land, you cannot go back. Your body is flattened, and would never live in any other air pressure. On earth, you would die within seconds after your return."

Hannigan didn't say anything. But he knew that Ting Sun Fu had spoken a deliberate lie. If Fu could return, why could he not? Was Fu afraid of Hannigan?

This was a sign of weakness, the first sign, and Hannigan kept his knowledge of it carefully locked behind inscrutable eyes.

"Then I'm to remain here, doing your will, living my life in this flattened world?"

Fu smiled. "It could be very pleasant here," he said. "The Princess . . ."

Hannigan had almost forgotten. He turned to see the girl behind him, her face flushed with hope and loneliness. She smiled, a sad, hopeful smile.

He turned back toward Fu and started to speak. The words choked in his mouth. The wall had descended, and Fu was gone. Sheila Mann was gone. Hannigan took a deep breath. He pivoted and walked to the Princess' side.

HANNIGAN knew more about the girl now. He had been with her for hours—how many he couldn't begin to guess. She stood with him on the stone balcony, looking down upon the city. They were drawn apart, for in spite of himself, Hannigan could give only his respect. His every thought was for Sheila Mann.

A strange place to call a city, Hannigan thought. As long as you looked straight ahead of you, you imagined that it might be a huge, crowded place, many miles square. If you glanced from the corner of your eye, you saw that, like its people, it was a narrow, stage-like place of odd proportions. A city, he remembered with a grim smile, crowded into the alley behind Ting Sun Fu's novelty shop.

He turned to look at the girl. She colored slightly, aware of his eyes upon her.

"Ting Sun Fu said that you were his daughter. That's impossible," he said bluntly. "Where did you come from? You're not Oriental."

She shook her head a little sadly. "Of course not. I am the daughter of the Ruling Three in name only. I don't know my own origin. I was taken from my people when I was very young. I am called the daughter of this land, but actually, I am only a figurehead."

She looked into his eyes long and tenderly. "I am a very foolish girl. I was lonely and I had hoped . . ."

He couldn't look at her then. He felt like a fool.

"You love her very much?" Her question was very softly spoken.

He didn't answer, but he knew that she understood. For a time neither of them spoke. Then, Hannigan said, "You've been a peach. You've done everything for me and I can't return the favor."

She turned toward her room. "You

wish to escape from this land? You wish to go back to earth, with the girl who sleeps?"

"Yes," Hannigan said simply.

THE girl whirled around, her eyes suddenly determined. It seemed to Hannigan that she grew taller and stronger at that moment. Her voice was suddenly tempered with a metallic quality.

"Then we will make a bargain. I will help you escape. If you think so much of this other girl, her safety means more than anything else to you. Would you be willing to give her up, if I promised that she could go safely back to your world?"

Hannigan stared at her. Could she—the one who had been so gentle a moment before—go through with such a bargain?

"You mean that I must remain behind?"

She shook her head. "No," she said stiffly. "I mean that you shall escape also, but that I shall go with you."

Hannigan felt his neck growing warm. Anger closed his fists and made his chest tight. It seemed idiotic that a man should resent so much being attached to so desirable a creature as this one. But he was head over heels in love with Sheila Mann.

Sheila. If he didn't accept the Princess' proposal, what would happen to Sheila?

"Well?" the Princess asked.

"I am to give Sheila up? Is that correct?"

The Princess' head nodded ever so slightly. "To save Sheila," Hannigan said grimly, "I'll accept."

"You must understand the people and the land," the Princess said. "First, the land was here." The Princess was seated on her divan, her feet curled under her, facing Hannigan and regard-

ing him with cool eyes.

"The Land of the Second Sun, which to you seems so odd. It is a flattened shadow-land. We partake of no nourishment, and we flit about, completely satisfied, as though we had full, earth-shaped bodies.

"IN THE beginning, there was the land. Through some queer trick of fate, there were the flat, eyeless bodies, wandering about. There were the eyes, and the misty stuff that men call mind and soul.

"Is it any wonder that in cleverly combining these things, the Ruling Three became a God to us?"

"But why did they demand that he take the identity of the three parts? That he take the form he had saved you from?" Hannigan questioned.

"Symbolism," she explained. "He says that the people demanded it. Actually, I believe that the darkness of the room, and the power of the man's mind, combine to hypnotize those who see him. Therefore, he appears to be what our people once were. He constantly reminds us that he saved us, and that we owe everything to him."

Hannigan nodded. That seemed to be a reasonable explanation. Far more reasonable than the one Ting Sun Fu had given.

He felt quite cold and indifferent about the whole thing now. He saw no point to crying over spilled milk. He would see Sheila safe, and pay off his debt. Maybe it wouldn't be too bad, giving up Sheila. But the very thought of doing this made him sick inside.

"The Ruling Three will not be present for several days," the Princess said suddenly. "While the two women he brought here are being studied, he will go back for more. We have only started to study. He will bring dozens, per-

haps hundreds, to our city. We will absorb your culture from them."

Hannigan swore softly. So Fu thought he was going to ruin hundreds of men and women? Bring them here and flatten them out like walking shadows?

"You will take us back tonight? You know the way?"

Her lips tightened into a straight white line. "I know the way," she said. "I will keep my promises and expect you to keep yours."

He looked away for a minute. When he looked at her again, she was brushing her face with the back of her hand. It was a quick, defiant gesture, but Hannigan was sure that a small tear had rolled down her face. He could see its trail, ever so slight, on the softness of her cheek.

He wondered why she should be unhappy. Wasn't she getting her way?

THE trail was dark, and in the darkness, the trees were invisible. Hannigan held tightly to Sheila Mann's hand. Behind Sheila, Nora Williams stumbled along, muttering to herself. Hannigan's other hand was cold, grasping the Princess' fingers.

"You're sure that there was no alarm given?" Hannigan asked.

"Nothing is guarded here," the Princess assured him. "No one would dare to escape. Even if they wished to, they wouldn't know the way."

"But you know it?"

"I have watched the Ruling Three—Ting Sun Fu."

Hannigan didn't reply. They had found Sheila and the hairdresser in a room beyond Ting Sun Fu's. Sheila had cried out in amazement when she first saw Hannigan. Now, she was cool, matter-of-fact. Hannigan had done that to her. He was paying close attention to the Princess, and ignoring

Sheila, though it broke his heart to do so.

Finally, they came to the meadow where Hannigan first found himself in this land.

The Princess halted and turned to Hannigan. Sheila Mann and Nora Williams drew into the tight little circle.

"Remember," the Princess said, "have complete confidence in me. Do exactly as I say. We are in no danger here. No one cares about or suspects our movements. The danger comes after we pass through the door."

Her eyes, close to Hannigan's, were large and misty.

"Give me the key," she said to him.

Hannigan drew it from his pocket and handed it to her. She held it between her thumb and forefinger. They stood huddled together, a tiny group of flat human shadows, in the center of a dark, silent field.

The Princess walked forward until she reached a small stone rising a few inches from the sod. She stopped and motioned them to her.

"This is the door," she said simply. "This is where he stands when he passes from the land."

Hannigan could see only darkness ahead. Darkness, and the outline of the forest. He turned and caught Sheila staring at him with frightened, bewildered eyes.

"Chin up," he told her.

THE Princess raised the key into the air, held it there for an instant, then lowered it slowly. She turned to face Hannigan. Tears were streaming down her face. Before he could move, she pressed close to him and kissed his lips. The warmth of her body, her quivering mouth startled him. Then, before he could speak or move, she turned away and struck at the air with the pronged key.

The key struck something solid, yet invisible.

All the bells in Heaven seemed to be ringing. They grew louder and louder. The Princess stood before them, her body erect. Her arms were raised, her eyes to the sky. Hannigan heard Sheila cry out as though in pain, then a sudden sickening sensation hit his own body.

For a moment, he felt as though he was swelling and growing all out of proportion. His eyes remained glued on the Princess. Then the door opened, and she stepped through.

Hannigan grasped Sheila's arm, dragging her into Ting Sun Fu's back room. Nora Williams stumbled behind them.

Events took place so swiftly after that, that the human mind and eye could not completely fathom them.

Hannigan knew that his body was normal once more, and that Sheila was also safe. He saw two people in the lighted room: Clamface Bailey was standing near the wall, and Ting Sun Fu, sitting on the divan, gazing down with stricken eyes at the figure of the Princess on the floor.

Then, with a feeling of horror, Hannigan saw the girl who had led them to safety. He knew now why she had cried out, why she had stolen that last kiss. She was lying face down, like a cleverly designed paper doll. There was nothing human or alive about her. There was no depth and no roundness. She had belonged to the other land, and Hannigan realized that she had loved him sincerely, for she had died to save him.

He heard Clamface Bailey exclaim, "Of all the tricks I've ever seen!"

HE SAW Ting Sun Fu arise slowly, still staring at the body on the floor. He wanted to look at Sheila, but

he didn't dare.

Slowly Fu's eyes met Hannigan's. "You have returned from your journey."

Hannigan nodded.

"What the hell goes on?" It was Bailey, but they ignored him.

"The daughter of the Ruling Three guided you here?"

Hannigan nodded again. "I—I didn't know that it would kill her. I . . . had promised . . ."

"I should have known it was a mistake. *Mei-yi fahzsu* (it can't be helped)." Fu's voice sounded completely hopeless.

He knelt by the body on the floor. He covered it tenderly with a silken sheet that had been folded on the divan. When he arose again, his face was as old as the world. He looked at no one. He spoke to everyone.

"I was mistaken. I thought I could help my new world by taking into it specimens to be studied. I have brought only great pain and death. Where there is horror and pain, there can be no happiness.

"I knew that the girl loved you." This time he looked straight at Hannigan. "I assume that she made you promise to remain loyal to her. Is that correct?"

Hannigan nodded. He still didn't dare look at Sheila. "I promised her I'd protect her here if she brought us all back to safety."

"I am wise to the way of a young girl's love," Fu said. "You see, she could not have you. Therefore, she did not want life. She chose a way to save you and destroy herself."

Hannigan felt his heart swelling until he thought the pain would break through. "I—I didn't know," he cried.

"ONLY a few of you have been affected by my whims. Now you are safe once more. An old man's love is a

painful thing. I worshipped this child from afar. I gave her everything she wanted, for you see, I was a love-sick old fool.

"So," Ting Sun Fu continued, "I am the only one who has been hurt. She wasn't hurt, for she died with love in her heart and on her lips. Could you leave her and forget the Land of the Second Sun? It will never hurt you or anyone again. I promise that."

Clamface Bailey hadn't moved. He was awed by what was taking place, though he understood little of it.

"See here, Hannigan," he said suddenly. "How about letting me in on what goes on? I don't understand . . ."

Hannigan turned to Sheila Mann. Their eyes met, and he knew that she understood.

"I think," she said softly, "that Fu is tired. He should be left to rest."

Hannigan turned to Nora Williams. "You, too, have the right to express an opinion."

Nora Williams shuddered. "Let's get out of this place. Don't worry about me talking. They'd toss me in the jug and accuse me of drinking my own shampoo."

"But I don't understand," Clamface Bailey protested.

"And you never will," Hannigan said sharply.

He faced Ting Sun Fu. "There are only two keys to the Land of the Second Sun?"

Fu nodded. "My own, and the one that belonged to the Princess." His voice broke.

"STAND up and face the door," Hannigan said. He was surprised at the seriousness of his voice. No more Sheila Manns would suffer, nor would the flitting shadows of the other land come here to die in agony.

Fu understood. He arose and stood

before the door.

"Your key," Hannigan demanded.

Fu produced the key and passed it to Hannigan.

"After I go," he asked, "you will close the shop? You will see that my people are cared for? There is money in the safe."

Hannigan agreed. He lifted Ting Sun Fu's forked key and wrapped sharply on the door. The wall opened, and they stared into the Land of the Second Sun.

Without hesitation, Ting Sun Fu walked into it, his stiff old body upright and determined.

The door closed behind him.

Hannigan sighed. "Now do you understand, Bailey?"

Bailey was still watching the door, and remembering the world he had seen beyond it. "He can't come back again? No one can come back?"

"I have the keys," Hannigan said. "Wait for me outside. I won't be long."

Bailey escorted the women out of the room. Alone, Hannigan faced the door to the other land. "No one will come back," he said quietly.

He avoided the flattened, covered body on the floor. The wall safe behind the desk was of a thick, heavy steel. It would be safe enough.

He stared down at the low divan, thick with colorful fabric. Then he kneeled and scratched a match on the floor. He placed the two silver keys on the divan, where the flames would be hottest. Then he touched the flame to the sheet covering the Princess' body and watched it grow strong and roar upward.

Without looking back, he ran swiftly from the room, toward safety, and Sheila's arms.

THE END

# BURROUGHS of BARSOOM

By

LESTER RYAN FLETCHER



THERE is hardly any necessity to explain a single thing to any fantasy reader after just mentioning the name Burroughs. The name of Edgar Rice Burroughs is practically a household word in the United States—for that matter—the rest of the world. The fame of the man rest solidly on the series of yarns he has spun about Tarzan of the Apes. These books have been translated into practically every modern language and have sold by the million both here and abroad. Yes, Edgar Rice Burroughs is a legend in his own right. The Tarzan series have assured that.

But to the died-in-the-wool reader of fantasy fiction, the real *aficionado*, when the name Burroughs is mentioned, a different chord than "Tarzan" is struck. For the real fan of Burroughs thinks of him as the author not of Tarzan but of the "Martian" books.

Burroughs' first story was "A Princess Of Mars" and in the opinion of those who know,

it was one of his best. Written during the first World War when such things as fantasy and science-fiction were as yet unformed, it created hardly a stir upon its publication in magazine form. In book form, a little later, it caught on and started a whole series of stories that will be immortal wherever the printed word is read.

It is almost superfluous to repeat any of the characters and names of places that Burroughs created in this series, for "Barsoom (Mars)", "John Carter (hero)", "Dejah Thoris (heroine)" and many others are as familiar to most readers as their own names.

In the Mars stories Burroughs used none of the elaborate paraphernalia that we usually connect with science-fiction. By an almost unexplained event he had his hero transferred from Earth to Mars by sort of a telepathic transportation. And the stories are nothing more than the adventures of the hero and a host of strange creatures that he met—some beautiful,

some horrid.

The magic of the stories lies in the reality with which they were created. And they still convey that feeling today. It is possible to read "A Chessman of Mars" and still feel as if it were written yesterday. Such artistry is of the highest.

When reading these stories it was possible for the reader to so closely identify himself with the hero that it was almost as if one were living the book. And this was in spite of the frequent intrusion of the author. The stories were mostly told in the first person which aided very effectively in preserving the illusion of reality. Those readers who followed the Burroughs' series on Mars in *Amazing Stories* a few years back will readily recall this.

It is the advice of any student or reader of fantasy and science-fiction that unless one has read the Burroughs stories, one has not lived. They are the essence and the prototype of all fantasies.

There have been hosts of imitators who have tried to capture a touch of the master—without success. He has an indefinable something that made and makes it impossible for an imitator to do justice to him.

Burroughs made no elaborate explanations in his stories for the events through which his heroes went; he simply described those events and in such a rich and flowing language that it is possible to remember the phrases always. When a Green Man attacked a warrior from Helium (the capitol city of Barsoom) you knew that you were in for one of the most exciting descriptions of combat that you could imagine.

It is generally agreed that the Martian stories were Burroughs' best; it is essential for anyone who wants a good knowledge of fantasy to read them. And they can be read again and again with the same sustained interest as they were begun with. The only trouble is that the stories end eventually.

THE END

## OUR FRIEND—THE TOAD



By A. MORRIS



**H**ERE is a small, warty, unexciting animal that is unusual in many ways. It drinks water through its skin, and sings sweet songs with its mouth shut. Its tongue is fastened at the front of its mouth and loose at the back and it sheds its skin and eats it for dinner.

Sometimes you find a swamp just filled with grown toads when there were none the day before. This is the result of a night's serenading by the males. Even though his mouth is closed tightly while he sings his love-song, the sound carries far out into the night. He fills the soft skin of his neck full of air, and this acts as a resonator throughout the duration of the trill.

The toads thus come together for their annual egg-laying project. Each female lays about 8,000 that are encased in spiral tubes of jelly. These strings of jelly fall to the bottom of the water and are covered lightly with dirt. In just a few days these eggs turn into tiny tadpoles. After about two months, the tadpoles absorb their tails and grow little legs and leave the water. This is a time of great danger for them, as they are quite a tasty dish for birds, snakes and large frogs. They are only as big as a cricket, and their skin is sensitive to dryness. They are found in the grass when it is dewy, but most of the time they stay near the swamps. A good rain will bring them all out at once, giving us that old misconception that toads fall from the sky when it rains.

Toads drink water through their skin instead of their mouths. They swallow their air and keep it stored in their throats. Their throat pulsates as they pump the air into their lungs. Having the ability to fill themselves up with air is often their best defense. Sometimes they inflate themselves

to the size of a baseball to prevent snakes from swallowing them. The hog-nosed snake feeds on nothing but toads, and outwits them by having an extra tooth in its throat to puncture the toad's balloon, bringing him back to hite-size.

A toad will never eat food that is motionless. It will strike at a pencil or even the flame of a match, but will starve to death right beside a tray of worms if they lay motionless. Toads are very quick to grab insects out of the air, but they don't use much common sense. If a toad is on one side of a window and there is a fly on the other, the toad will lash out with his tongue and attempt to grab the fly every time he goes past without having the sense to know that something is wrong. The tongue lashes out like a bull-whip, faster than the eye can see, but evidence remains on the window in the form of a spot of sticky fluid where his tongue touches it.

The only had thing that toads ever do is to eat a few honey-bees. Otherwise he is a valuable farmer's helper. He consumes all kinds of insect pests—cut-worms, beetles, caterpillars—while the farmer is still asleep. By morning his sides are bulging. It has been estimated that each frog gets rid of 10,000 insect pests in the three summer months. Scientists have often tried to estimate the worth of a toad. A few years ago the Department of Agriculture stated that each toad in a farmer's field was worth twenty-four dollars as an insect destroyer, but since prices have gone up, so has the value of the toad. Today he is called the Hundred Dollar Toad. No wonder that a "Protect The Toad Week" was recently observed in a Southern state.

THE END





Brandishing his sword, the victor looked out over the city

# The SWORDSMAN of PIRA

by Charles Recour

**There are times when a man's blade is a potent force for victory—but what about those times when a man's head and heart deny him the use of his weapons?**



Beside him on the roof lay his fallen enemies

"I THINK he didn't even see us when he said 'hello.' What's the matter with him, Don?" the girl asked petulantly. She half-turned her head to look at the retreating figure in twilight as it strode away. The girl's companion hitched his books under his arm. He smiled.

"He's a brain, Dot. That's his only trouble. I've talked to him a couple of times after class and he's so nuts about math and physics he can't think of anything else. But still, he's a good Joe, I guess. At least the rest of the faculty think so. A full professor at twenty-eight! That's some going. I hope I can do as well."

The dreamy-eyed coed looked up at him. There was more than liking in her eyes.

"Honey, I hope so too, but don't be as absent-minded as he is," she said. "I want a husband, not a thinking machine. I feel sorry for the girl that gets him."

"I've been telling you how lucky you are to have me. Anytime you forget it, think of Professor Wayne Morrow." They both laughed.

A hundred feet down the pathway on the campus, Dr. Wayne Morrow, Professor of Physics, continued his purposeful stride unaware that he was the subject again of student conversation. In many ways he was a striking figure. In spite of the baggy drape of his clothes it was apparent that he had a good frame, even if it was sparsely covered with meat. His six feet of height looked less because of the perpetual stoop and roundness of his shoulders from too much time over ponderous mathematical and physical tomes, but there was really nothing wrong with him that a few weeks of rugged living wouldn't cure.

The heavy glasses aided near-sighted eyes, but they couldn't conceal a com-

plete absorption in thought. The present Wayne Morrow was a far cry from the man who had captained a winning fencing team for the university, and who had spent two years in a Pacific jungle before being called back into a laboratory.

What I need is some action, he thought, his feet crunching on the gravel. I'll bet those kids thought I was some sort of a screwball. That's the trouble with nuclear physics. You get so tied up in it that you can't think of anything else. I'm going to have to relax more, he promised himself, knowing in his heart that he had no intention of keeping the promise.

There was too much to do. Tonight he had to go to Dr. Graves' home. What he wanted he didn't know. Usually a social call was wasted time, but Graves had helped him a lot and he had to reciprocate. Over the phone there had been a quiet urgency in Graves' voice as if he wanted to discuss something important. Well, he'd get it over with. Tomorrow there was that business meeting. Maybe he could work on that banker a little harder and drag another two hundred thousand from him. If he didn't, he knew the cyclotron would never get built.

Musing and dreaming, his mind totally preoccupied, and in spite of his youth, the perfect picture of the absent-minded professor, Wayne continued along the path till he came to the neat row of faculty homes. He walked by Dr. Graves' home before he caught himself. He smiled to himself. *I am getting foggy*, he thought. If I don't cut it out, I'll walk into a brick wall.

He went up to the porch and rang the bell. A minute later the door swung open and the friendly cheery face of Dr. Graves greeted him. He grabbed Wayne's hand and half-dragged him into the house.

"Come in Wayne," he boomed. "It's good to see you. You've been so wrapped up in that damned physics lab of yours that you haven't said boo to anybody. Here, give me your hat. Sit over there and I'll get a drink. The usual?"

Wayne laughed. "Give me a chance to get my breath," he said. "Yes, I'll have the usual—and I *am* sorry I've neglected calling on you, Dr. Graves, but you know how it is when you get interested in something. I'm doing work on the mesotron and—"

"—I know it is when you're especially interested in something," Dr. Graves interrupted. "I'm almost as bad as you, but I had to talk to somebody about what I'm doing and you're the victim. Besides, I need a good physicist—it's been a long time since I did any formal work."

Dr. Graves handed Wayne a drink. He took one for himself.

"Well," he said, "here's to Time—and Time's byways." He lifted his glass and drank. Wayne did the same, an expression of bewilderment on his face. Dr. Graves sat himself opposite Wayne.

"You didn't ask me here to toast Time," Wayne said. "What's the story?"

"But I did. I did just that. I want to talk about Time with you, Wayne. You may be able to help me with my—my—invention. I've made one, you know."

"No, I didn't," Wayne answered. "I thought you never touched a machine. What is it? Since when are philosophers becoming machine designers?"

"Machine designers have always been philosophers, Wayne. Maybe the reverse isn't true—but for once, in my case, it is. What do you know about time?" He almost barked the question.

"Well, now that you mention it, I

suppose I think of subjective time—time as it affects me. I haven't thought about the objective, scientific aspects of time since my last course in relativity."

"No, Wayne," Dr. Graves said, "what I mean, is what does the whole idea of time mean to you?"

"I suppose I think of it as a stream—a flowing stream. That's wrong, of course . . ."

"That's just it, Wayne! That's it," the philosopher said enthusiastically. "Don't you see that's the whole trouble with our attitude toward time. The natural view is the one you presented. We tend instinctively to think of time as a flowing stream, a stream without end or beginning. We regard events occurring in time as we would boats floating on a river. Then we become too 'scientific'—and we let the obvious escape us."

WAYNE lit a cigarette. The whole thing was interesting, but had the usual vague tones of the philosopher. Surely, Dr. Graves didn't want to discuss the philosophical overtones of time with him. What was the point?

"I can see by your eyes, Wayne, that you're wondering what this is all about. No, no, don't deny it. You think I'm a little overworked."

The physicist smiled. "Not exactly, Dr. Graves. I've known you too long. I will admit I'm curious to know what this academic discussion of time means. Please, go on."

"Thanks, Wayne, I will. I think I'll have more than a surprise for you before we're done with this." As the professor spoke, Wayne Morrow felt a sense of peace and relaxation. It was so different from the intense concentration of the laboratory. Dr. Graves continued:

"It's hard for you, a professional

physicist, to think of time in the old simple, natural, subjective way as I suggested most of us think. You automatically want to drag out clocks and yardsticks. You want to begin calculating relativity corrections. Frankly, I think that's a lot of bosh. I *know* the nature of time, Wayne. I know it better than any man on Earth."

His tall, skinny frame sprawled in the easy chair, Wayne watched the professor's intensity and self-absorption increase. Dr. Graves was certainly excited about his ideas!

"Time is not one stream, but a multitude of rivers, all co-existent. Events and happenings take place in these individual streams independent of each other. I see levels of time where hosts of events are all occurring instantaneously, but without affecting each other. I believe that the primary reason for our present disbelief in subjective time is simply that it has been impossible for us up to now"—Dr. Graves paused suggestively—"to contact any time-line other than our own."

"May I interrupt a moment?" Wayne asked.

"Go ahead, my boy. I know I must sound confusing."

"Are you trying to say that at the same time as our present world, there are other worlds existing, with happenings and events occurring in them, independent of us?"

"Yes, that is exactly what I mean," answered Dr. Graves.

"Well," Wayne said slowly, meditatively drawing on his cigarette, "I see nothing really fantastic in that idea. If I'm not mistaken it is an hypothesis that has been advanced by others."

"Yes, yes, I know that. I don't claim that it's an original theme. In fact, it's as old as philosophy. Even Aristotle suggested it."

"All right," Wayne said. "For the

sake of the discussion, let's say that it's true. We have these independent, yet co-existent streams of time. They do not affect each other. There is no way to show that they do. Therefore, regardless of the truth of their existence, we can only consider them as possibilities. It would certainly make an interesting paper. Are you going to write up the idea, Dr. Graves?"

Dr. Graves looked calmly at Wayne for a few moments. Then the look of concentration left his face. He smiled—then grinned broadly.

"You're much too conservative, Wayne, though that's just what I need in this case—a real old-fashioned conservative." He grew serious again. "I didn't ask you here, Wayne, just to talk about an old man's weird idea. I know how much you think of your own work. Be patient with me for a little while longer."

"Go on, Dr. Graves; I'm listening, believe me."

"If all I could do was to suggest a theory such as I've just advocated, I wouldn't even have asked you here. But I have another theory. I believe it possible for two separate time-streams to be linked! And the method for doing it has been at hand for a long time. It's just that nobody recognized it for what it is. Tell me, Wayne, what happens to an object—or a person—in an extremely strong and intense electric field?"

"Are you asking me as physicist or as a believer in your theory?"

"As a physicist."

"Nothing."

"Are you sure, Wayne?"

"Positively, Dr. Graves!"

"Do you know what has been suggested by several physicists? Do you know that one physicist has said that if an object or a person were suddenly thrust into a strong electric field, it is

possible that he would be rotated through a warped space into the fourth dimension. Have you heard of that?"

WAYNE didn't know whether to agree or disagree. The thing that Graves was suggesting was fantastic.

"Yes," he answered slowly, "I heard of that idea, but I don't believe it."

"I'm not asking that you do, Wayne, I know however—and you must agree—that space is bent and warped in the vicinity of a strong electric field—right?"

"Yes, that's true." Wayne answered.

"Granting that, it must follow that matter located in that space is going to be affected."

"So far, physicists haven't discovered that," Wayne pointed out.

"That's simply because they have not used a strong enough electric field—nor have they located it properly with respect to the subject. Wayne, come with me to my laboratory." Professor Graves got up and walked toward a door at the side of the room. Wayne followed him.

"Laboratory, Doctor? I didn't know you had one," he said.

"It's just my converted library, Wayne. It's not much to look at after a glance at a nuclear shop. But it does the work."

They stepped through the door. Wayne saw a small book-lined room. It would have looked like an ordinary library except for the fact that there were no furnishings on the floor. It was bare concrete. It supported a peculiar chair in the center of the room. A short distance away from it was a complex switchboard and heavy electrical cables led from it to a conduit through the wall.

Dr. Graves swept his arm in a possessive gesture. "Here it is, Wayne. There's not much to it, but it does the

job which I desire of it."

Wayne ambled over to the middle of the room. He touched the chair.

"Is this the apparatus that's supposed to warp space?" he asked.

"That's it, but it doesn't warp space, Wayne. Or rather, it isn't the warping of space that concerns me—it throws time askew." Dr. Graves couldn't keep a note of pride from his voice.

"Let me get this straight," Wayne said. "Are you telling me that if a subject is placed in this chair and you build up a strong electric field around it, that subject will be thrown through a warped space into another time? Is that the core of the whole thing? You know it's rather hard for me to believe—in spite of my regard for you."

"I don't blame you for calling me a liar, Wayne," the professor said dispiritedly. "It's a violation in some respects of all physical laws and I know you find it difficult to believe. But I'm going to demonstrate it to you. Just watch it a moment, Dr. Morrow," Dr. Graves said in mock seriousness and deference. "I think you'll change your mind about a lot of things—in a hurry."

Graves went to the bookshelf and took down a book. He carried it over to the chair which was only an ordinary wooden kitchen chair. To the top of the chair was a metal rod with wires leading from it to the switchboard. A metallic gauze net was also suspended from the wooden rod. Dr. Graves placed the book in the net, letting it dangle freely. Wayne stood to one side, his hands in his pockets, watching with rapt attention.

Graves went over the switchboard. He threw a switch and there was the whine of a generator.

"The generator is a five hundred horsepower alternator driven by an el-

electric motor. I used it as a source of current in order to isolate the system from the power lines in case of trouble. I don't want the power people on my neck," he explained.

"Now watch the book, Wayne. Through the mesh surrounding it, I'm going to send a sudden pulse of about ten thousand amperes."

"But the mesh'll melt immediately, Dr. Graves," Wayne pointed out.

"That's where you'll be surprised. Everyone has always assumed high current through minute wires will melt them. Has anybody tried it? You'll find that the obvious isn't always so obvious," Graves answered.

HIS right hand closed another switch. Wayne watched the book. For an instant the gauze glowed with a dull bluish light and the book meshed with it—disappeared!

Wayne's jaw dropped with astonishment. The professor cut the switch. The room was as quiet as before but the book was no longer in the mesh.

"What do you think of my theory now?" Triumph laced Dr. Graves' voice.

Wayne recovered himself. "It's unbelievable, Dr. Graves. Where is the book?"

"Put your hand in the mesh and see if it's there," Graves directed.

When Wayne thrust his hand into the mesh he felt nothing but empty space. The book had vanished completely!

"If I give the mesh a second pulse of current," Graves said, "the book will come back, nothing the worse for the experience."

Again he went through the procedure with the switches. Again there was the bluish halo. An instant later, the book dangled once more in the mesh in exactly the same position that

it had been before its disappearance.

"Incredible!" breathed Wayne. "If I hadn't seen this thing happen, Dr. Graves, I would have called you a liar."

"There it is. You've seen the results of my ideas, Wayne. Even philosophers have to do some practical things once in a while. The question now is, where did it go? Personally—and I base this purely on my own beliefs—I think it has been transferred to and from an adjacent time-stream. You may think differently. If you'll look at the book you'll see it's completely unchanged. It's neither warmer nor colder, neither cleaner nor dirtier, so it's anybody's guess as to where it went."

Wayne looked the book over closely. It was unchanged. He turned to Dr. Graves, but before he could speak, the professor said:

"I know what you're going to say—have I tried it on animals? The answer is yes. And that's why I want you here. I'm going to try it on humans! I'm going to put on that mesh, Wayne. Then I want you to control the experiment. If necessary you can bring in some friends to witness it. What do you say?"

For a long time Wayne remained silent. Finally he said:

"Dr. Graves, you have something here that is terribly great—you know the theory. I'm going to ask you a favor. Let *me* try it. Now don't stop me." His vehemence shut the protesting Dr. Graves' mouth. "You should be at the controls, because you know the most about it. And there's another good reason for sending me—you need a trained observer. Can you think of a better one than me?"

"Frankly, I like the idea of sending you instead of me Wayne, but this may be a more rigorous trip than you know. Do you think you can take it, Wayne? You're not your old self, you know," he



said dryly, glancing at Wayne's thin frame.

"In spite of my being a little out of condition, I want to try it. Besides, I need a little recreation, Dr. Graves. Let's go right now."

"We'll give it a quick try, Wayne, but I'm going to pull you back in five minutes. I better make it three. You don't know where you're going nor what the conditions are. We'll take no chances."

In spite of his outward calmness and confidence, Wayne was a mass of muddled, tumbled emotions as he sat himself in the plain wooden chair and prepared for the incredible journey. To think that he, a normal, sober-sided professor of physics, was going, at this moment's notice, to take a plunge into an unknown time or an unknown dimension. For a brief instant, his spine crawled with fear. Then he remembered his promise to himself. If he kept up at the pace he was going he'd soon be a dried-up shriveled academician, incapable of even thinking. The hot blood surged through him. Here was the promise of excitement and adventure. Here was a chance to go on man's strangest adventure. If Dr. Graves was right, he'd be travelling in time—but the duration of the trip was so short. Maybe, he thought, the whole thing would prove to be hardly worth while. At least one thing he was sure of. He wouldn't be harmed. The fact that animals had made the trip and the return was sufficient evidence of that.

"All right, Wayne. Sit quietly and put on the mesh. We'll give it a try." Wayne came out of his induced reverie with a start. Quickly, but with trembling hands, he slipped the mesh over his head. The mesh was light and thin and felt like a halo of feathers. The whine of the motor and the gener-

ator beat monotonously against his ears. Dr. Graves looked up from the switchboard.

"Are you ready, Wayne?" he called.

His mouth dry and tasteless, Wayne said: "I'm ready."

Wayne saw the professor's arm close the switch. The gauze surrounding his head grew unbearably warm. A bluish corona like an electric discharge emanated from it. Then all similarity to reality vanished. Wayne felt as if he was being twisted and torn. Brilliant colors appeared before his eyes. A kaleidoscope of ever-changing shades of pigment made his eyes hurt. His whole body felt as if it were being drawn through a threaded cylinder. The impression of distortion and twisting persisted.

Suddenly blackness descended on him, the deep, questionless black of pure velvet. Night had fallen on Wayne Morrow. The night of twisted time and space . . .

## CHAPTER II

DR. WAYNE MORROW, Professor of Physics, authority on mesotron reactions, sat erect with a groaning effort. He cradled his aching head in his hands. For an instant he was tempted to lie back and sleep—sleep would give his pain surcease. Struggling against the temptation, he shook his throbbing head. The effort made him wince and involuntarily he cried aloud. Then he opened his eyes.

He looked down the length of his long angular body and discovered he was stark naked. Not a stitch of clothing remained on him. His wrist watch and his identification band too had disappeared. He was as naked as the day he was born. The only familiar thing left him was the very short stubble of his beard—he had shaved



two hours before—or was it two millennia?

He looked around him. The pain was beginning to abate as full consciousness returned and he was able to take stock of his surroundings. He was sitting in the middle of a clearing in what could only be a jungle. Tall heavily boled trees surrounded the small clearing. The grass was thick, heavy tropical stuff, four or five inches high. Through the leafy fronds overhead, he could feel but barely see the intense sunlight which must be beating against the jungleland. Other than that there was nothing to see.

For a brief instant a sense of panic and terror seized him. But the thought came to him: you're safe. In a few minutes, Dr. Graves will throw the switch and you'll be back where you should be. There was no way to estimate time and even as his head was clearing, Wayne had the peculiar feeling that all was not right.

He stood up and looked around. Apparently there was no trail either to or from the clearing. Yet he did not dare risk exploring. What if he wasn't at the spot when the switch back in Graves' laboratory was thrown? He could take no chances. He must remain exactly at this spot. He wished suddenly for a cigarette. He stood a while in the depression formed in the grass by his body and thought. What would he tell Dr. Graves on his return? That the Doctor had been right about a space or time warp was true. But there was no evidence whatsoever of where he was. Judging from the feel of the sunlight's heat, the aura of humidity and dampness, he was very likely on Earth. But when—but where. Wayne was no botanist. He knew nothing of practical natural flora—or fauna—if there was such here.

All I can say to Dr. Graves, he

thought, is that I was in a section of jungle. I don't know where nor when it was. As he stood uncomfortably meditating on these things, an unconscious prickling at his spine gave him the feeling that someone or something was watching him. It was the basic reaction of the primitive man. The hackles rose on the back of his neck and he glanced carefully around, his eyes making the full circuit of the clearing, but he saw nothing.

He felt a desire to run into the jungle. He was torn between the fear of the unknown and the fear of leaving the spot.

Wayne, he told himself, take a grip on yourself. Don't get panicky. Get back into a sitting position exactly as you were or you'll be marooned here. Suppose Graves flips the switch *now*!

Suiting the action to the word, he sat down. As he lowered himself to his former position—slowly, against the prickling grasses—his astonished ears heard the sound of laughter, high, feminine, laughter. He jerked erect. The laughing redoubled in intensity. Desperately, Wayne looked for its source. And he saw it.

A girl had stepped from the jungle wall into the clearing. She wore a brief halter of furred skin with a loincloth of the same. Her hair was jet black and worn in long tresses. She was beautiful and wild, emanating the aura of a cat. Even from this distance he could see her finely chiseled features, her gleaming white teeth, her flower-red lips. She was ravishing.

Wayne's eyes caught all this in a fraction of a second. He felt himself turning a brilliant scarlet as much because of her laughter as because of his nakedness. The skinny six-foot scientist knew and was keenly conscious of what a ridiculous figure he must cut in her eyes—and he resented it. Covering himself as best he could with a handful

of grasses, Wayne started to walk toward the girl. Her beauty he had already noted, in spite of his missing glasses.

But as he approached her, he saw the laughter die down, and she stepped back a little as if to poise herself for flight. But she was not helpless. In her right hand she grasped a huge sword, a longsword similar to a cavalry saber but without the basket hilt. She half-lifted it in a threatening gesture.

"Ga!" she said, enunciating the syllable clearly. Wayne didn't understand the word, but her gestures made the meaning clear. He stopped ten feet from her. How could he communicate with this lovely savage? She took another step backward. She was taking no chances.

**S**ILENTLY the foliage behind her parted and Wayne saw the reason for her caution. Two men stood behind her. They too wore furred loinclothes, and in their right hands they carried swords similar to the girl's. For a moment Wayne thought that they were her henchmen or perhaps her bodyguards. He changed his mind as he saw one of the figures raise its hand to its mouth in a gesture cautioning silence. The beared creatures approached closer to the girl, their anthropoidal features grinning in delight at what was to be their captive. They completely ignored the naked Wayne though they must have seen him.

Wayne came to his senses. "Watch out!" he screamed, "behind you!" His arm shot up in warning. The girl whirled around, just in time to see one of the figures reach out to enfold her in his arms. Her eyes went wide with terror, but she retained presence of mind to act. Wayne saw out of the corner of his eye as he ran toward the scene, that the girl's sword blade licked

out and buried itself in the monster's chest. Instead of a soft girl the beast grabbed a chest full of cold steel. Involuntarily the girl screamed almost in the same breath with Wayne's warning.

Wayne found himself three feet away from the second startled sub-man. The man's sword was raised for the down-chopping blow. The heavy steel whistled to one side of Wayne and at the same time he grabbed the man's throat beneath the bush beard. Wayne clung like a leech, sinking his fingers into the flesh. The stinking breath of the beast was hot against his face and Wayne felt his gorge rising.

The sub-man grunted, his Neanderthal-like features screwed up in pain. Who was this skinny gnat trying to choke him? He dropped the useless sword, seized Wayne's wrists in his hands and tore the choking grip from him as a parent disengages its child's arms. Wayne was flung on his back a couple of yards away. Calmly the sub-man picked up his sword and stepped over to Wayne to finish the job. That was as far as he got.

The girl's blood-stained blade swept down cleaving the sub-man's skull to his chin. He pitched forward silently, half-atop Wayne drenching him in blood.

Breathing like a puffing steam engine from the unaccustomed exercise, Wayne staggered to his feet, unconscious of his bloodied nakedness. He looked at the girl. She smiled at him and this time her smile wasn't mocking and contemptuous. She started to jabber in her monosyllabic tongue and to Wayne's ears it was strangely beautiful. Her voice was musical and her manner pleasant.

"Well, I don't understand what you're saying, honey," Wayne said to her, "but the first thing I'll do is learn." Already she had stripped one of the corpses. She handed the furry loin-

cloth to Wayne. In a moment he had slipped into it. It felt wonderful to be clothed. Especially in front of her. His dignity was preserved and Wayne felt the compelling feeling, that for some reason he wanted her respect, not her contempt. He was thinking how badly he had acquitted himself in the encounter with the sub-men.

The girl reached down and handed Wayne one of the swords. She chattered incessantly, but finally stopped when she saw Wayne shrug his shoulders in the universal gesture of not understanding.

"Stay here, honey," he said. "I'll be back in a minute. I've got to try Dr. Graves once more." She waited puzzled, while Wayne ran over to the depression in the clearing. He sat down, the sword to one side and waited. Something's gone wrong, he thought. Dr. Graves has goofed-up somehow. But there was no fear or regret in his mind. Wherever he was, he felt a confidence and an awareness of living that he hadn't felt for a long time. Wayne waited in the depression for what he judged was about five minutes. There was no sign that anything could occur.

Half-reluctantly, half-eagerly, he got up and walked over to the girl. She watched him curiously. He bent over one of the corpses and removed a long leather thong which he wrapped around his waist. A loop at the left side served as a crude scabbard. Evidently the girl didn't trust him completely yet, for her sword never left her right hand.

"Now, let's talk, honey. I'm going to learn something about you and about this place. The starting point is for me to pick up some language. Here goes." Wayne said rapidly.

Pointing vigorously to himself, he repeated his own name. "Wayne. Wayne. I am Wayne."

"Wayne?" the girl repeated.

"Wayne." She laughed delightedly. She understood perfectly. "Kayna." She pointed to herself, "Kayna."

HER face darkened. She went over to the two corpses. Touching them with her sword she said, "Krag." She swept her arm around indicating the jungle, "Krag." She pointed to Wayne and then to herself, and then indicated that he should follow. Wayne nodded in understanding. She wanted him to follow her. He understood her to mean the jungle was full of what she called "Krag."

And so without further thought of the world he was leaving behind for the company of this beautiful little savage who went around splitting the skulls of Neanderthal "Krag," Wayne followed in her footsteps.

The next few days were an education and revelation for Wayne. Yet he fell into his new way of life surprisingly rapidly. From the cloistered walls of an academy, he was flung through time and space into a savage world, the meaning of which he could only guess. Yet he never felt more alive in his life.

By the tried and true method of identifying objects with sounds, he and the girl were able to converse, rudimentarily at first, necessarily limited to simple nouns and verbs. But Wayne learned quickly and thoroughly and because he was trained in abstract thinking, he soon had a command of language equal to the girl's—almost. And he began to learn about this strange world into which fate had thrown him.

The simple chores of living came less easily. For one thing, he was using muscles that he hadn't used for a long time. At the end of each day's trek he was dog-tired and completely exhausted. But he fought to keep up with the girl. Kayna seemed tireless, and beneath her beautiful body rippled mus-

cles that seemed like fine steel wire to Wayne.

As the days went on, he felt himself hardening. He imagined that as soon as he began to eat regularly he would put on weight to fill out his skinny frame. He was beginning to take a strange pride in his appearance and the sword at his side reminded him of his saber-days at the university. He had not forgotten about Dr. Graves. He blazed their trail by notching a tree trunk here and there but he knew that it was going to be a difficult thing to find his way back unless he had a guide of Kayna's ability.

On the fourth night, after four days of steady travel through the dense thicket of the jungle, they had again made camp. In spite of his fatigue, Wayne felt a consuming desire to talk, to learn more about the girl and the world in which he had been thrown.

Over their usual cheerless meal of fruits and vegetables selected from the profusion to be found in the forest-land, Wayne began to learn about this strange world. Under Wayne's skillful examination, Kayna clearly explained their situation. They were heading toward a sea, a fresh-water sea. She and her people lived in a city on an island in this sea, the Korus, she called it. The city of Korus-tan was the single solitary habitation of people like herself. It was a lovely city, she said, a city of pleasure and enlightenment.

"Wayne," she said, in her clear lovely voice, stumbling occasionally in her descriptions, "you will love Korus-tan, and my people—and they will like you—someday—if we can ever get to Korus-tan."

"Why do you say 'if,' Kayna?" Wayne asked.

"Because the Krag's rule *this* land. Our people have fought the Krag's for ages, but never to a decision. They

come at night from some secret city on these shores, from this jungle land. They come in boats by the hundreds and they raid our city and in spite of everything we can do they come back, again and again. That's how I was taken," Kayna said, her lovely face sad and dispirited.

"What do they raid the city for?" Wayne asked. "Are they trying to capture it?"

"No, they have never tried to make a decisive raid—although we think they could if they wanted to. They are interested in only one thing—women and girls. For some reason they are incapable of breeding females and so they must steal our people to build their race. They use us as a sort of fodder," Kayna explained bitterly.

"You mean if they wanted to the Krag's could take Korus-tan against all the efforts of your warriors?" Wayne demanded incredulously.

"Yes," she said, "there are so many of them."

"Why haven't your people sought out their city or their breeding grounds and destroyed them at their source?" Wayne asked.

"Even if we could find their city—and no one has even returned from it—they are so numerous and such fierce warriors that we couldn't capture it," she answered.

"How did you manage to escape if no one ever does?"

"I didn't escape from the city way—wherever it is—because I was taken as the private property of one of their captains—Gulak was his name. He won't capture anyone ever again. He has my knife blade between his ribs. I threw myself overboard at night and I was washed ashore. This is his sword which I managed to take with me. Oh, Wayne, I hope we can get back to Korus-tan." Her last words contrasted

so femininely with her confidence of before. She was a woman, tender and sensitive underneath her air of competence. Clearly she was lonely and afraid.

WAYNE sat staring into the fire for a while before he spoke.

"Kayna," he said, "have you thought about where we'll get a boat when we do find the shores of Korus?"

"If we have to make a raft, Wayne, we will. Let's not worry about that."

"All right, Kayna." Wayne patted her shoulder. She didn't shrink from his touch. A new found confidence was gripping him. He almost felt paternal toward this charming little savage who didn't behave like a savage at all. She had more the manner of a princess, and in his mind's eye he felt himself assuming the role of her protector, but only in his mind. She could probably take better care of herself than he could.

"What do you suppose your family thinks about your disappearance?" he asked, suddenly.

"They've given me up for dead, Wayne. They know that once a girl gets in the clutches of the Krag, she's worse than dead. They must think I've mated with one of the beasts already and accepted my lot as so many have done. My father, though, must be grief stricken," Kayna answered.

"What about your lover?" Wayne asked slyly, glancing at her out of the corner of his eye. She drew herself up. Fire flashed in her eyes.

"That is none of your business Wayne," she said angrily.

Wayne couldn't resist goading her. "You mean you have no lover?"

"No," she said contemptuously, "I have no lover, but I have many suitors. And *they* are all men."

Properly rebuked, Wayne felt the sting of her answer.

"I'm sorry, Kayna," he said. "I didn't mean to offend you. I was just joking."

"I don't think such remarks are in good taste. I am not accustomed to being ridiculed," Kayna said stiffly.

"You laughed at me," Wayne replied softly, "remember?"

Kayna glanced at him. The stormy look on her face could not remain. She started to smile. She fought back the smile, but it broke through.

"It's my turn to be sorry, Wayne. You looked so funny without a loin-cloth and so helpless without a weapon and you were so red!" She broke into a merry laugh. Wayne laughed with her.

"Yes," he admitted ruefully. "I guess I did, but Kayna, if you had come from where I did and under the same circumstances, you would have felt a little more than ill at ease, too."

"I don't understand, Wayne. You tell me you came from a different time. What does that mean? Isn't time now?"

"Don't trouble your pretty head, Kayna. I don't understand it either. All I know right now is that I'm lost in a weird jungle with a beautiful and sometimes petulant girl and I don't know where we're going or whether we'll get there."

"Do you think I am beautiful, Wayne?" Kayna asked archly, after the manner of women of all times and all places. Wayne looked at her loveliness, so scantily clad, so warm and inviting in the flickering firelight.

"Yes," he answered, "you are beautiful, Kayna. The loveliest girl I've ever seen." He moved nearer her. The light flickered and waned on her countenance, accentuating the shadows around her lips. Her eyes mirrored the flame and danced independently of it.

Wayne reached out and took her hand. He held it in his own and bent

his head to examine it. It was a firm shapely hand, the palm, cut and bruised from carrying and wielding the heavy longsword. The nails were symmetrical. Kayna attempted to withdraw her hand, conscious of its dirtiness. Wayne held it tighter. His head bent over it and he pressed his lips to it.

"Why did you do that, Wayne?" Kayna asked. "Why did you kiss my hand?"

"In my world, it is a mark of respect—and affection."

"Is that all?" Kayna's clear eyes were shining at him. Wayne felt a strong impulse to sweep her into his arms, to forget about Kraggs, to forget about this world, the Korus Sea, the city of Korus-tan, Dr. Graves—to forget everything but holding this exquisite jewel of a girl in his arms. Abruptly he dropped her hand.

"Sometime, I'll tell you more, Kayna," he said. "Goodnight."

In ten minutes the two of them were sound asleep. And the only sounds that disturbed this quiet section of the jungle along the Sea of Korus, were the sounds of the deep breathing of Dr. Wayne Morrow, Professor of Physics, and Kayna of the City of Korus-tan, in a time and place unknown.

### CHAPTER III

ONLY the creak of the steering oars disturbed the dead silence of the night. That and the hiss of water gently flowing beneath the fast-moving prows of the long boats as their rectangular sails caught the night winds propelling them silently and quickly toward the cluster of lights that was the city of Korus-tan.

There were thirty ships in the fleet, bunched together near enough for a man to shout from one to the other without raising his voice. They were

crammed to the gunwales with the ugly, brutal, beetle-browed Kraggs. All of them were warriors, armed to the teeth with every variety of weapon that could be used lethally. There were the usual longswords, the knives, the circular metal shields, the leather helmets. Body armor hampered freedom of movement and was no protection against the slashing blows of a longsword or a battleaxe.

Gothar stood in the prow of the leading boat, resting his heavy bulk on the haft of a short stabbing spear. He was scanning the water ahead as the fleet silently approached the harbor of Korus-tan. He was talking with his lieutenant, Somag.

He licked his thick lips in anticipation of the night's coming events.

"The Pirans have a surprise for them tonight, eh Somag?" he laughed. "When their lookouts catch us, they'll think this is another raid. They don't have enough men and what they do have are scattered. They'll never be able to stop us."

His companion, as evil-looking as he, nodded in agreement.

"I'm glad we decided to make a clean sweep of it, this time, Gothar. I'm sick of these foolish raids. Now there'll be women and food enough for all of us—all the time. It's too bad you had to kill Fomar, to convince him to let us finish the job. The Pirans are so soft they don't deserve to live. The only thing worthwhile that they have are their women."

"And what women!" Gothar exulted. "The poor fools think that theirs is the only city in all Pira. If they had more courage they'd explore and raid as we do. Then they'd find that Korus-tan is only one. But they won't have a second chance. Tonight Korus-tan will belong to the Kraggs."

"And someday we'll be strong enough to take the rest of these miserable fish-

ing cities. When we get enough women we can build an empire of our own. And you know who'll rule it, Somag? I will. By the gods, I'll rule all Pira. And I'll start with Korus-tan. We'll mate with the women and use the men as slaves!" He ranted on in this vein for ten minutes while the lights of Korus-tan crept ever nearer. Somag listened patiently. He was subordinate now to Gothar, but someday that would change too, he thought.

He listened again to Gothar.

Gothar's voice was raging. "On the last raid we made, one of the girls got away. Kayna, her name was. She was the daughter of Thanor and a prize if I ever saw one. She butchered Gulak and went over the side with his sword. I sent a party after her but they never came back. They're probably still chasing her. When they get her, she's mine."

"Don't worry about one girl, Gothar," Somag said. "Tonight you'll have your choice of hundreds." He licked his lips in anticipation.

And so they chatted while the vessels of the sub-men crept closer and closer to the city of Korus-tan, where the Pirans were unconscious of the danger that menaced them.

For some reason, hidden in the complex genetics of the Krag, they were unable to reproduce with their own females. Consequently they used them only as slaves and for the most part killed the majority at birth. It was necessary for them to raid the communities bordering the Sea of Korus, and those located on islands in the Korus, in order to obtain the mothers of their future warriors. Until now, they had limited themselves to simple raids for that purpose alone, taking only enough women to satisfy their needs. This was the first time that a major raid was to be undertaken—less a raid

than a case of actual open warfare.

Gothar was the instigator of the raid. His megalomaniacal mind had decided that now was the time to make the supreme bid for power. He would be the ruler of all Pira. And the Pirans would crumple beneath his powerful forces.

THE encroaching fleet was spotted first by a simple Piran fisherman. His cries of alarm swept across the quiet harbor, setting it into an uproar. The prow of the leading vessel bore down on his small boat and before he could leap into the sea, the hairy arms of the Krag had dragged him into Gothar's vessel.

Tearing himself free, he grasped the axe in his belt and split the skull of the nearest Krag. In the ensuing battle he sold his life dearly for two more of the beasts went down before a longsword pierced his body.

His cries had served their purpose. Running down from the brightly lighted buildings that bordered the waterfront, the Pirans came in every state of dress, so long as they had a weapon in their hands.

They were not unduly alarmed. Such raids were taken as a matter of course. In most cases a few dozen men from the Watch could take care of the invader, often butchering the lot before they made their boats with whatever booty they had taken, usually a few women.

But when the first defenders reached the quays of stone and wood, they knew something was remiss. Here was no trivial raid. This was an invasion. Hardly had the first attackers put foot on shore when the cries of the alarmed Watch were arousing the rest of the city. Men swarmed toward the waterfront.

But a never-ending stream of Krag



poured from the thirty ships that were attaching themselves to any mooring point. Warriors streamed from the vessels by the hundreds. The sheer weight of the attack bore the defenders back. The Pirans were outnumbered from the start. They had no realization that the Kraggs were so numerous. In all their history no raid of this size had ever been made.

They sold themselves dearly. For every Piran that fell beneath the flashing blade of an upraised battleaxe or longsword, two Kraggs succumbed in the same fashion. But their resistance was in vain.

Gothar, bloody, and wounded, yet with animal-like courage and undeniable vitality led his forces with irresistible strength against the Pirans. Again and again the longsword of Gothar buried itself in the body of a Piran.

The defenders separated into little groups. Here a body of Piran warriors would be backed against a wall, surrounded and outnumbered by the hordes of Kraggs. The attackers would press themselves forward only to retire as the Pirans thinned their ranks mightily. But every time a wave of Kraggs stepped back from one of these islands of resistance, they left the island a little smaller, until eventually a last attack would bring down the remainder of the little group.

The streets ran with blood—both of Krag and Piran. The city of Korus-tan was becoming a graveyard.

Pirans locked themselves into buildings. Their wives and families surrounded them. Anything that would serve as armament was used in the defense of these individual castles. But to no avail. There were too many Kraggs. Lustful, angry, their hateful natures overwhelmed everything.

Back and forth, up and down the streets, in and out of the flat-topped

buildings the fighting raged. The very ferocity of the battle startled the defenders into a more bitter opposition. But no matter how bravely they fought, the warriors, the sub-men of Gothar, conquered.

On the roof of the flat-topped building that served as the residence of Thanor, King of the Pirans, ruler of Korus-tan, a mob of nobles was gathered. They watched the flames rise from a building here and there that had been fired by the Kraggs in the madness of their rage against the Pirans.

They watched the little islands of Pirans disintegrate under the pressure of hordes of Kraggs.

There were tears in the eyes of gentle Thanor. He turned to his group of aides.

"You know what this means to all of us. The Kraggs have finally learned how weak we are. Else why would they ever attack in this force?"

HE SIGHED bitterly: "First Kayna, my beloved daughter, is lost to me—then this monstrous invasion! The gods are looking down on us this night. There is only one thing to do. We must sell ourselves as dearly as possible."

He straightened his bowed shoulders and took the longsword that was handed him. A leather helmet and a shield were given to him and in a trice he looked exactly like his armed nobles.

"Let us go, sir," one of the younger men of the entourage said. "They will soon be here."

"I never thought the monsters would have the intelligence to make an all-out raid like this. They must be led by a renegade," another added.

"I don't think so, Koro," Thanor the king said. "No Piran would ever ally himself with these sub-human beasts. They have learned—that's



all. And we will suffer."

The party started toward the stairway, dimly illuminated by the oil lamps suspended from the walls. Hardly had they reached the head of it, when a horde of raging Krag with Gothar in the foreground bubbled up from it. Without hesitation or loss of time they hurled themselves on the Pirans. Before their momentum was checked they had cut down three of the Piran nobles. But the remaining four were galvanized into action.

The younger men gave a good account of themselves but in short order their lifeblood was running out along the flagged roof. Koro, the young noble with whom Thanor had spoken, screamed as a Krag passed his blade through his body. He coughed out his life an instant later.

Gothar's evil face glittered in triumph as he crossed blades with Thanor. The old man bravely faced him, his sword and shield poised. As Gothar moved to close with him, a half-dozen Krag started to rush in on the King of Korus-tan.

"Get back! Get back!" Gothar screamed. "I'll take the old fool myself—alive!"

His henchmen fell back and let him cross blades with the king.

There was a brief passage at arms. Skillfully the weary arm of Thanor parried the first few strikes of the Krag. But his age was against him. A thrust, a parry, the clash of steel against the king's shield, a twist of the blade and the old man's sword was flung across the roof. Disarmed he stood breathing heavily, waiting for the death thrust from Gothar.

The Krag threw back his head and laughed.

"You're not going to die just yet," he roared. "I want your prestige—it will be useful for dealing with the people

we have left you."

He half-turned to his men. "Take him and truss him up until tomorrow," he ordered.

A dozen Krag moved to obey him. Thanor dropped his useless shield and looked about wildly for an escape. There was only one—the edge of the roof—and below—destruction. He turned and started to run toward the edge. Before he could move three steps the Krag had seized him and tied him securely. They led him into one of the rooms below, posted a guard, and the rest, under Gothar, pursued their orgy of slaughter—and worse.

THE sun rose the next morning on a strange city. The ancient and noble city of Korus-tan, on the shores of the mighty Korus Sea, was no longer the pride of the Pirans. It no longer belonged to the Pirans. The streets, ordinarily so neat and peaceful, so filled with bustling business and pleasure, were silent except for the hoarse cries of the patrols of Krag that ran through them, here toying with a Piran girl, here torturing a Piran man.

The Pirans had no illusions. They knew what was in store for them. The beast-like Krag had always been merciless in dealing with them when they had been so unfortunate as to fall into their clutches. Occasionally fishermen, who had been captured by the Krag and managed—so rarely—to escape, told of the treatment they had undergone. Now the torture was multiplied a thousandfold.

In the throne-room, Gothar had taken up residence and even now was preparing his orders to be given to the captured city.

He sat on an unornamented chair on a little dais, that constituted the seat of power in Korus-tan. Pirans have never been a people who believed in great

formalities and empty gestures. Their plain homes and places of business, emphasized in their king's "palace," was the proof of their essentially kind and simple nature.

In front of Gothar, on the floor, chained together, were the ruling functionaries of the city—those who had been taken alive—and there were not many. Among them was the king, Thanor. He held his head in his hands. The shock of the tragedy that had overwhelmed him and his people was still apparent on his face. Regardless of the humiliation, though, he would face Gothar as any Piran should.

"Well, Thanor," the exultant Gothar said, "the Kraggs are not as stupid as you thought, eh? We didn't expect the taking of Korus-tan would be this easy. Why don't you talk to me? Do you find it distasteful?"

Thanor said nothing, but his eyes grew dark with hate. One of the nobles spat on the floor at Gothar's feet.

The ruler of the Kraggs grew wild with rage. "Kill him!" he screamed at a Krag standing on guard a few feet away.

Without a word, the monster whipped out his longsword and brought it down across the neck of the Piran in a brutal stroke that sent his head rolling across the floor.

No one moved. The Kraggs broke into laughter. The Pirans remained silent.

"That should teach you," Gothar said. He could not keep an hysterical note of rage out of his voice.

"You fools," he ranted. "You utterly stupid animals. Did you think that the Kraggs would be content to prey forever on you for your women? Did you think that we were incapable of organizing a city ourselves? Did you think that we were not men? Well, you'll learn. We are not going to live in holes in the

filthy Piran jungle to come out at night and raid you at your pleasure."

"I—" he ranted, "I am going to be your ruler from now on. I decree that Pirans have but one purpose for living. It is to serve Kraggs in every way. You'll not only provide us with women and girls. You'll work like you never worked before. I am going to build a city of Kraggs that will be the envy of all Pira. Yes, and eventually, we Kraggs will rule all Pira."

THE spittle trickled from his lips as he worked himself into a furious rage. The Kraggs stared in open-mouthed admiration at their leader. No Krag before, in all their known history, had ever had the genius for organizing that Gothar had shown. And the result was that Kraggs were ruling Korus-tan. The beast-men were having their day.

Thanor listened to the raging Krag in silence. The nobles, the few that were left, were not thinking of themselves or the fall of Korus-tan. The fear that coursed through them was sheerly for their women. What hideous and bestial orgies would be celebrated from now on! Every man at that moment wished for death, a wish which must be denied. The women, the girls and the children would be left to the tender mercies of the sub-human Kraggs. Wild thoughts of escape and revenge coursed through the minds of every Piran. But most realized the futility of doing anything now. Only time was on their side. The Kraggs were unpredictable—in that lay the only salvation possible.

The next week in Korus-tan was one of mingled horror and relief. Any Pirans of ruling class were automatically imprisoned and thrown in the long unused dungeons built deep beneath the palace. Under the undeniably efficient leadership of Gothar, the Kraggs saw to

it that the Pirans went about cleaning up the city and restoring normal conditions. Fishing boats went to sea on the broad bosom of the Korus, as usual. But now, in addition to the crews of Pirans, every boat had a guard of Krag according to its size.

In the market places, Krag supervised.

Along the streets Krag patrolled the paths formerly taken by the Watch.

In a matter of weeks, under Gothar's able direction, normalcy was restored to Korus-tan. The major program of Gothar's, the assignment of mates to the Krag, was begun, and the evil work of planning a super-city of Krag was started.

It would take time, Gothar knew, but time was of no importance. For once in their history, the Krag had an organization that was powerful. He knew that undoubtedly other Krag tribes and groups would hear what had happened in Korus-tan. It was inevitable that such information would leak out, but Gothar had prepared for that contingency by making the defenses of the city impregnable against the certain attacks that were to come. Now it was Krag against Krag and the Pirans were slaves and pawns in the struggle.

Gothar was a paradox in himself. Most Krag were little more than beast men, inheriting all of the bad qualities of their Krag fathers and none of the good qualities of their Piran mothers. But somewhere in this primitive world, a mutation of mind had occurred and Gothar was the result.

The days sped on, the Krag becoming more and more confident and powerful each day, while the Pirans languished beneath their yoke, utterly without inspiration or hope.

Gothar had founded a world—a subman had seized a civilization, rudimentary, but a civilization.

## CHAPTER IV

KAYNA often spoke of Korus-tan to Wayne. She described the beauty and the simplicity of the city.

The two of them were still blindly traveling through the jungle hopeful of finding a trail that would lead them to the Sea of Korus.

"Don't you have some system of navigation by the sun or stars?" Wayne asked Kayna one time.

"What is that—that navigation?" Kayna asked, puckering her face in bewilderment and stumbling over the rough equivalent of the word that Wayne had made.

"It's a way of looking at the sky and telling where you are by the position of the sun and the stars. You must have some way to tell where you're going when you're at sea. How do your people do it when they're fishing?" Wayne questioned again.

"I don't know," Kayna answered. "I've never had to learn those things. I had enough servants when I was at home. I am a girl, Wayne." She said the last archly.

"At this rate we can stumble around until we're dead and never find our way to the sea. Besides I wish we could change our diet. I'd like some fish or meat. Don't we ever run into any game or animals that we can eat?"

"That's a good sign, Wayne," she said. "The animals stay inland away from the Korus Sea. I guess they too have learned to fear the Krag. We haven't seen any animals. So we must not be too far inland."

"I hope we find one or the other soon," Wayne grumbled. "The sea or animal-life."

"We will. Sooner or later we must."

As usual when night came they selected a suitable site, built the customary small fire and settled themselves

to eat. Water was no problem. Many plants, peculiar in their tropical splendor and beautiful too, contained adequate and potable quantities of it. Their food consisted of nuts and tubers, and strange flowers that tasted like vegetables. Still it was unsatisfying.

Wayne felt strangely content during these evenings alongside the fire with Kayna. There was something sympathetic and understanding about her. In addition she was intelligent as well as beautiful and he listened, fascinated, to her descriptions of Piran life.

He no longer thought about Dr. Graves. He had lost his place of origin and all of his previous world was a dream. His association with Kayna in this unknown world made the rest of his existence unreal. He dared not think about it. The die was cast and he was now living in a world about which he knew nothing and which bore comparison with his own world only in that it had people in it too. That was the only common meeting ground. The sun, the stars, the flora—and he imagined also the fauna—bore no relationship either to the world he knew. Wayne felt like a stranger who has somehow forgotten completely his point of origin. And it was not unpleasant.

He knew how futile it was to speculate on where Dr. Graves' time or space warper had cast him. He was here; that was enough. And if he had to doubt it, all he needed to do was to look across the flickering fire at the completely lovely and adorable, half-naked little savage that sat opposite him. He felt a guilty twinge using the word "savage." Kayna was far more civilized than most of the girls he had known. She was sweet and good and kind, decent, charming and physically exquisite. That was enough. Fatalistically, he asked himself, why question fate? Your lot has been thrown in with

this girl—make the most of it. With the adaptability of an intelligent human, he did.

And he found himself surprisingly disturbed and moved by her. Kayna was a woman—a girl of exceptional attractions. Wayne could not help but be drawn to her. And the fact that she liked him didn't help to increase the gap between them, either. On several occasions, he had been tempted to seize her to him and to crush her madly against him. But he resisted the impulse. After all, he told himself, it would be unfair to take advantage of the fact that she had to look to him as her protector through sheer necessity.

Physically, Wayne was beginning to feel better than he ever had. Those years spent in the laboratory and over books had done nothing but bolster his ego. Now, he found with surprise that he was looking with pride on his well-filled-out hide, the simple pride of a smoothly graceful and muscular man. It was a good feeling.

During the day he would often jump and run wildly ahead through sheer exuberance. Such a simple task as climbing a tree was a pleasurable effort. He thought back about the short time when such a feat would have left him gasping for breath.

Kayna was fully aware of his physique too. She had a tendency to joke about it.

"Wayne," she asked from the other side of the fire, "are all the people of your world like you?"

"What do you mean?" Wayne said, puzzled.

"You were so tall and skinny when I first saw you. You looked like a tree." She laughed. Wayne grinned.

"If I thought you were laughing at me Kayna, I would thrash you," he said.

"I dare you to."

Wayne jumped toward her like a bolt of lightning, but she was as fast and she simply eluded his grasp, dancing about the fire keeping it between them. She was laughing all the while.

WAYNE fainted as if to run in one direction—then dashed in the other. In an instant she was in his arms. She struggled furiously for a moment. His face was an inch from hers. Suddenly he found his mouth on hers and she was no longer fighting him. Her arms were tight about his neck. They clung together for a minute, then Wayne gently disengaged her arms.

"Kayna," he whispered, "I—I—" He stumbled and stuttered but the words wouldn't come. He couldn't say he loved a savage.

Kayna looked at him archly as she resumed her place by the fire.

"What are you afraid of, Wayne?" she asked. "Is it me?"

Wayne smiled wryly. "Yes," he said, "it's you. Now let's get some sleep." He rolled over, conscious of the length of steel at his side and in its very feeling of uncomfortableness he felt a great security. The longsword had become as much a part of him as his Phi Beta Kappa key had been before. The longsword was a combination tool and weapon used for every purpose from clearing a path through jungleland to serving as a dinner knife. Just through toying with the weapon Wayne's old fencing skill had come back to him and he was anxious almost for an opportunity to exercise it—an opportunity that would vindicate him in the eyes of the girl, he thought, for his sorry showing when he first appeared in this strange land. And so musing, he fell asleep.

The next morning after the usual breakfast of roots and tubers and fruit they resumed their futile, directionless

search for the sea.

Kayna was walking, almost running, fifty feet ahead of Wayne when it happened. There was a ferocious roar and the biggest feline that Wayne had ever seen shot from the jungle straight as a bullet for Kayna. He screamed to the girl. She turned and in the same breath dropped to the ground.

The gigantic spring made by the huge cat carried it far over her, where it landed ten feet beyond her sputtering and growling as it came to its feet for a second run. Wayne had a good chance to observe it. It was exactly like every picture he had seen of the prehistoric saber-toothed tiger, and he knew at least this much—Dr. Graves had hurled him into something more familiar than he knew.

There was no time for speculation. As the tiger turned to repeat his spring toward Kayna, who had half-risen to her feet, Wayne covered the intervening distance.

"Run to the jungle away from the trail," Wayne roared at the girl as he approached her. There was barely enough time for her to do it, but in a mad scramble she managed to hurl herself off the trail, which left nothing between the cat and Wayne.

The beast flattened its ears. Its gaping mouth opened and from it issued an incredible roar like the blasting of a locomotive. Then true as an arrow it shot the twenty feet remaining for Wayne. As the monster approached him Wayne seemed to see everything in startling clarity. It was as if he had been accustomed to facing saber-toothed tigers all his life. While he could feel his heart beating wildly from excitement, there was no fear.

The tiger was almost upon him. Moving with the grace and speed of the trained warrior, Wayne dropped to one knee, at the same time hurling himself

to one side. The tiger's razor-taloned claws missed him by a hair and as the beast shot by him, Wayne's stout right arm thrust out the longsword in a pass of bullet-like speed. He buried it to the hilt, such was the force of the thrust.

THE animal screamed, three feet of steel buried in its chest. Like any primitive woman defending her mate, Kayna ran from her hiding place and started to slash wildly at the dying monster. There was no need for her to do so. It died quickly.

Wayne walked over to the fallen tiger and cautiously withdrew his longsword. He felt Kayna's eyes on him.

"You are a warrior, Wayne," she said. In that simple accolade Wayne felt that he had made the grade. The image of him as a naked skinny boy could be in Kayna's mind no longer.

"Well, at least we can eat now," Wayne said. "Is this good to eat?" He nudged the fallen animal.

"There are better meats," Kayna answered, "but a hungry belly is not too critical."

The two of them fell to work stripping meat from the carcass and building a fire. Presently they were gorging themselves.

After eating and resting once more Wayne and Kayna pushed on, always following the tortuous trail in hope of nearing the Korus Sea. After some hours of walking, abruptly Kayna stopped. Her little nose wrinkled and she laughed delightedly.

"Wayne—I smell the Korus!" she exulted. "It must be near."

"That's our cue to get off the trail then, Kayna. From what you said, where there's sea there's a Krag. I don't particularly want to tangle with any more of those Neanderthal submen. We'll go to the right," Wayne

directed her firmly.

The two of them left the relatively well-marked trail and set off through the jungle toward the right, carefully maintaining their sense of orientation so that they might return if necessary. It wasn't necessary. Not ten minutes after they had left the trail they saw before them the vast body of the Korus Sea. There was no conventional beach. The jungle came clear up to the sea. This made it awkward to see along the shore and the two of them carefully scanned the little they could see for sight of the Krag. Suddenly Wayne exclaimed:

"There, Kayna! See, down there! There's a boat nosed into the jungle edge."

"I see it. But let's be careful. Where there are boats there are Krag."

They both unsheathed their longswords and cautiously wound their way through the dense jungle undergrowth toward the spot where they judged the boat might be. Not a long time later they saw the clearing.

Drawn up against the shore and moored to a tree trunk was one of the lateen-rigged, thirty foot sloops of the Krag. Squatting around a fire at which they were eating were five Krag, their hairy mouths talking and eating at the same time. All carried longswords, which they used to carve chunks of whatever meat they were eating. There was much laughter and raucous shouting. Wayne and Kayna crept nearer.

"There are five of them, Kayna. All we can do is surprise them. Will you try it with me?" Wayne whispered in Kayna's ear.

A dangerous glint crept into the beautiful girl's eyes. "Of course I will," she said simply.

"All right—now!" Wayne said.

Quietly the two of them ran toward

the seated Krag. They were upon them before the startled sub-men knew what had happened. Wayne's blade lashed out in a sweeping stroke splitting the skull of one of the monsters before he was aware that he was attacked. The other four jumped to their feet, but Wayne noted with satisfaction from the corner of his eye that Kayna's blade was buried to the hilt in a Krag's throat. The remaining three had their longswords ready by now and with the viciousness characteristic of them they swept to the attack from surprised defense.

Wayne found himself sorely beset by two of the creatures. His blade wove a net around him through which nothing could penetrate but he was so occupied in defending himself that he almost had no chance to press home an attack. The clash and clang of blade on blade made the jungle ring. Added to that terrifying sound was the growling and screaming, at times guttural, at times shrill, of the Krag. Wayne had to admit to himself that the sub-men knew how to fence. Theirs was not a continual sweep of saber strokes so wasteful of time and energy. Instead they slithered home thrust after dangerous thrust. Wayne realized that this couldn't last much longer. He feinted a low thrust at one of the Krag. The man parried it, but with the speed of a striking snake Wayne counter thrust and his blade sank into Krag flesh. He whipped it free just in time to parry the stroke of the other Krag.

**B**UT with only one antagonist, Wayne found the going easier. It wasn't long before the look of terror and desperation on the face of the Krag told him that the man was beaten. Suddenly the Krag hurled his longsword at Wayne, who barely deflected it. The Krag turned and ran but the new war-

rior was on him before he had gone five feet. With a subtle thrust Wayne finished him and turned toward Kayna.

She was having a difficult time. The Krag who was battling her was skillful and he was pressing home his attack with vengeance. He was determined to die taking at least the girl with him.

Kayna was giving a good account of herself, but the Krag was infinitely stronger and would have shortly beaten her. Wayne stepped in and engaged the man's blade. There were a few short sharp furious passages and Wayne passed his longsword through the man's body.

He stepped back, breathing heavily.

"That was more than we wanted, Kayna. Did he touch you?" he asked.

"No," answered Kayna, "but he would have in a few minutes more. You are truly a warrior, Wayne. Where did you learn how to use a longsword like that?"

"If I told you, honey," Wayne answered cryptically, "you wouldn't understand—but it was in a fencing academy."

Kayna looked puzzled but did not press the matter. She had long since given up trying to understand Wayne's origin. But there was more than ordinary admiration in her eyes when she looked at him.

The two of them went back to the boat and examined it. It would be awkward for two of them to handle, but it could be done. Wayne was almost completely ignorant of small boat sailing so Kayna almost automatically took command of the situation.

Wayne could see the change in the lovely girl the instant she set foot aboard the boat. There was a sparkle to her eyes that hadn't been there before. She was in her element. She knew what she was going to do. And she had the confidence to do it.



The Pirans were sea-faring folk deriving their living from the sea. That much Kayna had stressed, and so it was only natural that she should be a born sailor—daughter of a king or not.

In a short time, under her direction, both she and Wayne managed to rig a single triangular lateen sail, giving the craft a rakish look. Wayne was forced to smile at the resemblance it bore to the vessels of the early Moroccan pirates. Occasionally there would crop up in his mind thought of his odd position. He, Wayne Morrow, a life-long student of nuclear physics, was aboard a dirty little boat with a ravishingly beautiful, half-naked savage girl, in a land he knew not where nor when, bound for some strange city entirely beyond the ken of his civilization.

But such thoughts were becoming fewer and farther between. Wayne was fitting himself into the role of a primitive warrior—a Piran—with an aptitude that astounded himself. And for some reason he belted the better for it. He was mentally conditioning himself for the inevitable—it was possible that he was going to spend the rest of his life here—possible?—no, probable, and therefore it would not do to have any regrets. The die was cast and Wayne was going to make the best of his lot, whatever was to come.

WITH the sail rigged they got the sloop-like vessel, almost a ketch, off the little mooring and headed out on the awful bosom of the Sea of Korus. Only it didn't really look awful—on the contrary, Wayne thought to himself—it looked magnificent. Now out of the dense jungle, he could see the beauty of the setting sun, the awesome but not fearful proportions of the sea. The lazy gentle motion of the boat tended to make him feel moody but not in an unpleasant way. Nor did the pres-

ence of Kayna, her long black hair wind-blown, do anything to make it unpleasant. She stood in the stern of the boat, her hand confidently guiding the tiller and there was a smile of satisfaction on her face.

Wayne went over beside her. The fragrance of her took his breath away. He forced himself to concentrate on something besides her beauty.

"Kayna," he asked, "do you know where you're going?"

"I can feel it clearly, Wayne. I told you about that inner sense of direction that all Pirans possess on water. I know as surely as my name is Kayna, that we are headed directly toward Korus-tan." She became enthusiastic. "You'll like Korus-tan," she went on. "It is a free city and a happy one. The people are friendly to strangers—but not to Krag—and I know my father will like you. Oh, we'll have a wonderful time in Korus-tan."

"But they don't even know you're alive. Will they believe it's you?"

"Of course they think I'm gone forever but that will only double the surprise. We will have a good time, I promise you that, Wayne."

"I know we will, Kayna. I'm very anxious to meet your people. Are all the women as beautiful as you?" Wayne asked playfully.

"Would it be fair to answer that?" she countered.

"I know the answer already. No one can be as beautiful as you, Kayna." The tone of tenderness and seriousness with which Wayne said it, did not disturb the girl's happiness. With the intuitive knowledge of women in all times and all places she knew what was happening—and her own heart was being moved too.

THE soft wind kept the boat moving at a good clip. Night fell fast, but



since the land was already out of sight, vision was not necessary. Kayna's sense of direction functioned just as well in darkness as in light.

They had been drifting on and on for more than three hours. Wayne felt a little touch of terror such as any landsman feels so far out of sight of land. In addition he was guilty that he couldn't relieve Kayna. There was no effort to steering the craft, but Wayne's lack of a sense of direction would not permit him to assume the tiller.

"Kayna," he suggested after a time, "why don't we lash the tiller on its present course and give you a chance to rest?"

"But I'm not tired," she replied smilingly. "I'm so happy to be on the water again and away from that horrible jungle, that I feel I could go on like this forever."

"All right," Wayne agreed, "as long as you feel that way, I guess it's all right. Is there any chance of the Krag's finding this boat? I mean, are we likely to run into any boatloads of them?"

"There is always a chance of that, Wayne. They often are on the lookout for a lone boat, a fisherman returning to Korus-tan from the day's work. But we won't really have to worry about that until we get nearer the city. It's not likely that we'll meet any Krag's this far away unless the gods will it."

Wayne sat back against the stern boards and listened to the slap of the waves alongside the boat. Suddenly Kayna began to sing. In a soft tremulous voice she half-sang, half-chanted a ballad of her people on the sea. It was a poignant melody and like all enduring songs, it was simple. Soon, Wayne picked up the melody and the words and the two of them sang together. Never before in his whole life had Wayne felt so content. His arm

stole around Kayna's waist. She snuggled closer to him and his cheek rested against her hair. They sat that way for a long while, saying very little after the song.

"Kayna — I — I —" Wayne began hesitatingly.

"Yes?" she whispered encouragingly.

There was no time to say anything else. There was a crashing shock against the side of the boat as another and similar vessel lay alongside. It had crept up in the darkness and Wayne and Kayna were so absorbed in each other they had not noticed it. A half-dozen burly Krag's poured across the gunwales. They wore their little leathern helmets and shields and in their hands were the traditional long-swords of fighting men—or sub-men.

## CHAPTER V

WAYNE jumped up from the stern whipping out his longsword in a single smooth action. In the same motion he hurled himself toward the attackers. In spite of the darkness he could make out the outlines of the Krag's. His blade flicked out and there was a hoarse scream as it found flesh. Wayne felt Kayna at his side.

But it was hopeless from the onset of the attack. In the cramped quarters of the boat there was no chance to maneuver or to exercise any skill at arms and the sheer weight of the attackers bore Kayna and Wayne back toward the tiller until Wayne lost his footing and tripped over a rope. The instant he went down three Krag's were on him. Kayna was as easily subdued. Their weapons wrenched from their hands, the two captives were dragged forward to where a squat brutish Krag was stepping aboard amidships.

His eyes lighted up when he saw Kayna. An anticipatory leer crossed

his vicious face, twisting it.

"By Korus-tan, the wench is a lovely morsell!" he roared. "Tie the two of them up. We can use more slaves in Korus-tan—but the girl—ah!"

The Krag did his bidding without question. A lantern was rigged to the mast and the Krag chieftain gave orders. He stood in the prow while roaring his commands but his eyes stole continually toward Kayna.

Wayne felt bitterness seize at his heart. That all went well until now! And some strange words were revolving in his mind. Had he heard right? The Krag had said "*We* can use more slaves in Korus-tan . . ." But Korus-tan was a city of Pirans, of people like Kayna and himself. What did it mean?

"Put six men aboard this craft. I'll take it back to Korus-tan with the girl. Take the man aboard your craft and put about for the city when you're ready." The Krag gave his orders quickly and his men obeyed him unhesitatingly.

Kayna looked at Wayne. There were suppressed tears in her eyes. But she made every effort to be brave.

"Be brave, Kayna," Wayne whispered to her as he was roughly hurried across the gunwales of the touching boats. "I'll find you in Korus-tan. I swear it." A kick stopped further talk. Wayne was hurried across, and thrown ignominiously to the bottom of the other vessel. He could hear Kayna cry shrilly: "Wayne . . . Wayne . . ." Wayne saw the bobbing lantern tied to their former vessel gradually receding in the distance. He could waste no time in worry or regret. Fortunately he knew both he and Kayna would end up eventually in Korus-tan. That was important. Meanwhile he would bide his chances of escape.

He looked around. There were an-

other six Krag aboard his craft. The usual brutish and most evil-appearing one was in command.

Lazily the boat rolled through the night and from the conversation of Krag he was able to overhear the events that had transpired in Korus-tan since Kayna had last been there. The tale horrified him even though he could only imagine the details of the capture of the city. That these monstrous creatures should be running a city such as Kayna had described was unthinkable. Yet they were and apparently with a vengeance.

He heard the Krag often mention Gothar, King of Korus-tan, nor did the name of Thanor, Kayna's father, escape him. Gradually a very clear picture formed, a picture that explained all that had happened in the city. An inkling too could be discerned of the ambitions of Gothar. For some reason, Gothar had been able to weld the motley undistinguished beast-like Krag into something resembling an organization, contrary to all Kayna had told him of the beasts. Kayna had undoubtedly underestimated the Krag. For that matter, the Pirans as a whole had made the same mistake, too.

Therein, thought Wayne, lies the seed of destruction for any peoples. To become contemptuous of a foe, no matter how mean or trivial he may appear, is not a wise policy. It may result in something like this.

So musing on the events of the day, listening to what he could of the Krag's conversation, Wayne fell asleep, making every effort not to despair at being separated from Kayna. He wouldn't have put in words his feeling toward the girl, or if he had, he wouldn't have used the word "love," but it was mighty difficult for him to describe the relationship at all. He fell asleep trying to do it.

KAYNA watched Wayne being taken from her with a feeling of hopelessness and despair. Tears came to her eyes but she suppressed them. Her hands tied behind her back and legs hobbled with a short length of a rope, the Krag carried her to the bow of the little vessel and placed her at the feet of the Krag chieftain. He was grinning sardonically. Kayna looked up at him with hate in her eyes. She could not mask the revulsion and disgust that gripped her. The Krag bent down and without a word pressed his slobbering mouth against hers. She writhed and struggled to be free but she could do nothing. She lay there passive at last.

The Krag sat beside her. He laughed uproariously.

"You don't like Thoomos, eh, wench?" he demanded. "Why not? Am I not as good as that hairless sniveling thing we found you with? When we get to Korus-tan you'll find you'll have to be nice to me if you want to live."

"What do you mean," Kayna demanded indignantly, "when we get to Korus-tan? You wouldn't dare go there with these half-men." Her eyes took in the crew.

"Never fear, you golden-haired spitfire," the Krag said, "I'll take care of you in Korus-tan. And I'll see that Gothar doesn't see you either. He has a liking for wenches like you. I want you for myself."

The continual reference to Korus-tan by Thoomos confused Kayna. She looked puzzled.

"Thoomos," she asked, "what do you mean by taking me to Korus-tan? You know if you are caught there, you'll be cut down like a falling sail. Why do you want to go there?"

An expression of incredulity crossed Thoomos' face.

"How long have you been away from Korus-tan?" he asked.

"Many weeks," Kayna answered. "My father is Thaynor, the ruler. Yes — yes — Thoomos, you can take me back to Korus-tan. My father will reward you and let you go free." Kayna knew that such a thing had never been done but she was grasping at straws.

Thoomos grinned in satisfaction. "That explains everything, girl. Let me tell you something."

He related the events of the preceding weeks when Korus-tan along with its inhabitants, had been captured by the Krag. As the horrible story unfolded, Kayna could hardly believe it, but the Krag told it with such matter of factness that she knew in her heart that it was true. Her heart sank desperately as she realized now the absolute hopelessness of her position. After a time Thoomos loosened her hands so that she could eat, and he made no further efforts to molest her. Kayna knew that he was merely waiting until a more propitious time.

The time went by rapidly, all too rapidly for the girl, and soon the story of the Krag was confirmed. The boat was approaching the outer wharves and jetties of Korus-tan and no attacking vessels poured from the city to seize the Krag. As they got closer to the shore, she could see Krag walking about, swaggering in their new-found power. And everywhere there were cringing Pirans, all the fight knocked from them.

The boat docked, her feet were unhobbled, and Kayna was taken at the side of Thoomos toward some residence in the city. Even as she walked through the streets, she was recognized by hundreds of Pirans and she called out to them. A cuff across her mouth from Thoomos silenced her.

As they walked toward the residence

that Thoomos had confiscated, the beast-man's mind was thinking rapidly. He knew now that beyond the question of a doubt, he had the daughter of Thaynor, the very girl whom Gothar had ordered them to find if possible. He fought a terrible battle within himself. His cupidity battled with his fear of Gothar. Nevertheless his greed overcame his new discipline.

Thoomos violated his new code. He led Kayna directly and quickly to his residence, hoping against hope that none of the Krag's who had seen the girl recognized her.

Fearfully and tearfully, Kayna entered the building which Thoomos had confiscated from some Piran noble. She felt unclean and ashamed as she saw former people she had known serving as common servants to the Krag's, bowing servilely and cringing from expected blows from the beast-men. How the mighty had fallen, she thought. She had no illusions. She knew what was in store for her.

The Krag took her directly to his sleeping chamber. His lusts would not wait. They needed satisfaction at once.

"Now," Thoomos grinned evilly, his eyes lighting as he considered Kayna's perfect figure, "we will have some pleasure. Come here, girl!"

Kayna shrank back from him. She had no weapon and the room was bare but for the sleeping facilities. The Krag seized her harshly again and pressed her to him. Kayna screamed in terror and loathing as those horrible lips came down on hers. She struggled fiercely and beat her fists against Thoomos' chest. He laughed.

"I like a Piran girl to have spirit," he snarled. "It's much more fun."

Suddenly there was a disturbance outside the door. It burst open and a half dozen Krag's armed with long-

swords stood there.

One of them stepped forward, his eyes taking in the tableau presented by the half-naked girl and by the trembling Thoomos — frustrated and enraged. He said:

"Gothar wants the girl you brought back. He thinks she is the daughter of Thanor—he was once king here. Give her to me, Thoomos."

THOOMOS' beady little eyes went from the Krag's face to the girl's. He licked his lips. For a moment he was going to protest. Then the discipline asserted itself.

"All right," he said, forcing himself to say the words, "take the girl. I was just going to test her anyway." He shoved Kayna toward the messenger and his men.

"And you are to come with me, Thoomos. Gothar wants you to explain why you didn't bring her directly to the Pool. Remember the first law of the Krag's? All loot must go to the Pool."

Disgustedly Thoomos nodded. He hitched his longsword about him and accompanied Kayna and the guards.

Another short tramp along the streets, Kayna taking in the sight of a beaten and enslaved people with disbelief. Everywhere they went she was recognized, but no one made a move to assist her. The men looked ashamed and the women cringed from the sight of the little parade of captive and conqueror, but not a hand was raised in her protection. Kayna recalled that Wayne had once made some remark about a people becoming soft. It was true. Her people had become soft. They were no longer their old selves. The Krag's had beaten them thoroughly. As Kayna recalled Wayne, her heart beat faster. If only he were here! She wondered what had happened to him and to where he would

be taken.

Soon the little party arrived at the palace. Kayna recognized the grim changes as they crossed the stone portals. Everywhere Krag's stood on guard, leaning on their longswords and laughing and talking among themselves, deigning only to talk with the Pirans when they wanted to insult the men, or toy with the women.

Kayna and Thoomos were led to the throne-room. How often had she sat with her father in this place. She looked at the throne on its little dais. Seated in it was a huge Krag, obviously the Gothar of whom they had spoken.

When he saw the girl the newly arrived party brought into the room, his booming laugh blasted out.

"Ah! It's Kayna. The last I remember of you was when you slipped a steel blade into Gulak's ribs and slid over the side. I had given you up for dead, wench. What do you think of the court of Gothar I, the ruler of all Pira?"

Kayna remained silent. Anything she would say would only goad this monster into action. She must remain calm and sensible, ignoring the taunts and insults.

"Answer, girl!" Gothar insisted. "Answer, or I'll have your tongue cut out at the roots."

"What do you want me to say? You've destroyed Korus-tan and all the Pirans in it!" she finally shot back in a burst of anger.

"That's more like it!" exulted Gothar. "I like a girl with spirit. And I need a lively one for a queen. Kayna, how would you like to sit beside me on the throne of Korus-tan?"

This time, Kayna refused to answer. She merely looked straight at him, and a half-smile of contempt crossed her face.

Gothar jumped up. "Take her away.

Put her next to her father in the dungeons. She'll change her mind when she's rotted there a while."

Then he turned his attention to Thoomos. Soundly he cursed him out for trying to take the girl. Soon they were engaged in a resounding argument and there was more than one among the "courtiers" whose sympathies were with Thoomos. Why should Gothar have his choice of everything—after all, he ruled merely by the grace of all the Krag's who had served him.

The bickering went on until interrupted by the announcement of food. The social structure of the newly formed Krag empire was rather loosely bound. The cement was no more than greed.

KAYNA was taken to the dungeons between two guards. When her father ruled there had been little occasion for using the cells and so she was not at all familiar with the place. She entered the dirty, poorly lighted chambers, hesitatingly, aided every now and then by a suitable shove or push from one of the brutal Krag's.

She was thrust into a cell. The stone door thumped shut behind her. She was alone.

"Father, father!" she called aloud. "Are you here?"

Through the stone walls that muffled everything, she heard her father's voice: "Kayna! My child! Are you here? Are you hurt? What have they done?"

From other cells came similar queries and in a short time Kayna had related all that befell her since she had been first captured by the Krag's. Nor did she fail to boast of Wayne and the protection he had afforded her. After a time when all the questions had been answered and Kayna had learned in detail what had happened in Korus-

tan, she and her father managed to talk at great length. Kayna was shocked at his despair. It seemed to him as if there was no hope or no possibility of ever changing the present state of affairs. The Kraggs had things too firmly under control. On this gloomy note, Kayna managed to sleep, naps that were only interrupted for feeding or for conversation with a despairing group.

## CHAPTER VI

WAYNE awakened the next morning still to find himself stiff and trussed on the bottom of the boat. He was hungry, miserable and uncomfortable. The morning sun was already beginning to get very hot and this combined with the stinking bilge-water that continually washed over him, was enough to turn the stomach of any stout man. Nor was the sight of the beastly Kraggs designed to improve the spirits of a man, but Wayne had changed. In his new-found role in this primitive life, he had developed a philosophy of calmness that would permit him to take the greatest of disasters without faltering. The loss of Kayna was a keen blow, but he did not despair. He lived, he told himself, and come what may, he would see that lovely girl again. He knew now that he loved her and that this world was now his own. Very rarely he found himself thinking of Professor Graves, and then only in the most detached manner possible. He no longer thought of his ego as Dr. Wayne Morrow, Professor of Physics—Twentieth Century—but only and simply as Wayne—he could hear the name on Kayna's lips—almost a Piran of the city of Korus-tan which lies on the bosom of the Sea of Korus.

So meditating philosophically on his new lot, Wayne lay in acute physical

discomfort, watching the unhurried activities of the Kraggs as they kept the boat moving. Even if he were free he knew that it was almost a certainty that he could not navigate the vessel, much less overcome six longsword-armed Kraggs. But it amused him to dream about the possibility.

The day wore on. Wayne was given a little dried meat, biscuit and water, which slaked the acute hunger that had built up within him. He was told often and clearly by the Kraggs that he was destined for the slave market of Korus-tan. But beyond joking at his expense they made no effort to converse with him. They continued with their patrol, operating in a loose and inefficient manner, Wayne thought.

They often encountered boats, fishing craft, on which the wealth of Korus-tan had been built, as Kayna had told him. These boats were now manned by five or six Pirans—slaves—who did the work, guarded by two or three Kraggs, carrying longswords. So consisted the greater part of the fishing fleet. A few patrol boats like the one he was on, carrying from six to twelve men, patrolled the fishing fleet, making sure that all was well.

Wayne felt disgusted at what he saw. He could see clearly that all Pirans were not made of the same stuff as Kayna, or they would never have come to this sorry plight. Determined men could easily have beaten the Kraggs, and soundly, even as they were now.

Actually the Kraggs, according to his lights, could not have prevented a determined revolt. There were more Pirans than Kraggs, and man for man the Kraggs were stupid and unintelligent. They were simply fighting machines. Wayne could not understand the failure of the Pirans to assert themselves. It was hard to recognize Kayna in these sorry people of hers.

And musing in that manner, Wayne spent most of the day. An occasional kick or scuff was his from the Krag, but because he didn't cry out or protest, for the most part the Krag left him alone. There was no sport to be had with this tall, lithe stranger.

Late in the day, the Krag came upon a boat that gave them trouble. It was a small fishing skiff manned by one man. The leader Krag hailed it.

"What are you doing out alone? Come aboard!" the Krag commanded. Wayne was startled as well as the Krag for the reply that came back was anything but placating:

"Come and take me! Come and get me, you dirty monsters!" A shrill voice screamed back.

The Krag leader spluttered with rage and anger. He put the boat about and a merry chase ensued. The larger spread of sail of the Krag sloop gave it too much speed however and the sound of preparation for boarding the smaller vessel came to Wayne's ears. Then there was a bump as the boats came alongside each other. There was a rasp of steel on steel as the first Krag stepped aboard the other vessel, followed by the scream of agony of a dying man. A volley of Krag oaths ripped out. There was more tussling and a man, bound like Wayne, was thrown to the bottom of the boat beside him.

Wayne looked astonished. He was just a wisp of a man, a little, old gnarled gnome, leathery-skinned and watery-eyed, but there was a brightness and twinkle to his face that belied his age. His face was bruised and blood had trickled into his beard, but he was nonetheless chipper.

"And who might you be?" he cackled to Wayne as the angry Krag threw him roughly into the bilgewater with Wayne.

"I'm a Piran fighting for the Princess

Kayna, old man," Wayne answered, "and you're the first fighting Piran besides myself that I've met. My name is Wayne and if my hands were free, I'd give you one."

"Well-spoken, young one," the oldster chuckled. "I might say the same for you—about the fighting man—I mean — for most Pirans' blood has turned to water these days. You know about Korus-tan?"

"Yes, I've learned about it through these beasts," Wayne pointed his head in the general direction of the Krag. "But who are you and what's your name, oldster? I like the manner of your speech."

"I'm called Gelthor," the old man said, "and I've been a fisherman all my life. I managed to be at sea when the Krag captured the city. Ever since I've avoided them—until now—except to occasionally slip one a bit of steel. And by the gods I'll live to feed more of them to the fishes if I run into any more men like you. What's your story, lad?"

WAYNE outlined his tale, omitting any reference to his real origin. He told him about the capture of Kayna, whom the old man seemed to know well. Gradually Wayne got from him a clearer picture of the nature of Korus-tan before the invasion of the Krag. The Pirans had been a peace-loving and democratic people relying little on formality. But through the long years of casual repulsion of Krag raiders they seemed to have atrophied their aggressive instincts, never bringing the thing to a final showdown. The result was that the Krag had done pretty much as they pleased up until the time of this final battle, when they had taken the city.

As night came again, Wayne got to learn Gelthor and his nature pretty well. Here was a man, who in spite of

his age, was filled with the fighting vigor of youth and who could be relied upon to do everything to battle the Krag. He explained to Wayne how he had hidden on the outskirts of the city, avoiding the Krag for the most part, except now and then when he would ambush one.

This had to be done carefully for the Krag were not averse to punishing the innocent with the guilty.

Wayne found himself liking Gelthor the more he talked with him. There was such candor and honesty about him, that Wayne felt completely at home with him. He was a man to admire.

Eventually the talk came around to escape. With the two of them to work together, Wayne felt a confidence that was formerly lacking. As darkness started to drift in on the vessel, Wayne and Gelthor formulated their plans. Ignored by the six Krag, it was a relatively simple matter for the old man to loosen Wayne's bonds. In turn he released the old man's. But they left the ropes draped loosely over them, simulating helplessness. Now all that remained was for a couple of the Krag to approach them, to give them the necessary armament and chance.

About an hour later, a couple of the sub-men approached the bound men. One of them kicked the old man and started to laugh at his grimace of pain. He kicked him again.

"I should kill the both of you, but especially you, old one. Togarth was a good man. You tricked him and killed him." He kicked Gelthor again. Both he and his companion were now right over the two prone men.

"All right. Now!" whispered Wayne.

The ropes dropped from him and from Gelthor. Before the startled Krag knew what had happened, Wayne had seized the speaker by both

feet. He gave a terrific heave and the Krag was over the side of the vessel. His screams were stopped by water.

Gelthor, lacking Wayne's strength, had knocked the other Krag to the bottom of the boat and was trying to strangle him. The huge Krag thrashed around trying to break loose. Wayne bent down, seized the battle axe at the Krag's side, and with a single blow split the man's skull.

The old man arose, found a weapon in the form of a wooden club and stood at Wayne's side. But Wayne had already started to dash toward the stern of the boat where the remaining Krag were congregated. The four of them were fully aroused now. They saw the body of one of their members lying with a split skull in the bilge. They heard the screams of the drowning Krag. Their longswords were out when the fighting bundle of muscled fury that was Wayne, hit them. The first sweep of his axe caught one of them at the juncture of the neck and shoulder and he went down like a pole-axed ox, blood gushing from him in vast spurts.

A longsword flashed toward Wayne's head. He parried it with a neat sweep of the axe and countered with a blow of his own as he stepped back. Fortunately for him and Gelthor, the quarters were crowded and the Krag hampered each other more than they aided.

Wayne stumbled backwards to avoid the flailing longsword blade. He tripped and went down. The longsword blade swept down and Wayne thought surely that this was it. But he reckoned without Gelthor. The old man hurled himself under the blade, a longsword in his hand. He buried it to the hilt in the Krag.

The two other Krag came in at Gelthor and drove him back. But the old man's interference had been long



enough to let Wayne get to his feet. His axe flicked in and out like a lighter longsword and he handled it as effectively. He swirled the blade in a long stroke and beheaded the onrushing Krag. The old man was a skilled man with the sword but the weight and size of the Krag was telling. Fortunately, Wayne came in from the side. The Krag died with a split skull too.

"Heh, heh!" the old man gasped and coughed and spluttered almost breathless from the activity. "We gave them more than they bargained for, eh?"

Wayne dropped the axe and extended his hand.

"I must thank you, Gelthor," he said simply. "You are a fighting man."

The old man wrung it firmly. "I can say the same for you, young one. At least we both behaved like Pirans, not like the milk-spined weaklings who gave in to these monsters." He gestured at the shambles.

"Let's get to work, Gelthor. And then you can navigate this thing to Korus-tan," Wayne directed.

**I**T WAS but the work of a moment to heave the remains of the Krags over the side. They washed the blood from themselves and then had a hearty meal from the generous stores that were aboard. At once Wayne began to lay plans for their activity. The major hope was that they wouldn't be picked up by another patrol boat of Krags before they reached Korus-tan.

Gelthor assured him that it wasn't far now and that the first place they would head for would be Gelthor's hiding place. They would have to study the lay of the land and situation before they could make any attempt to rescue Kayna which, Wayne made very clear to the old man, was his major desire.

Under the skilled hand of Gelthor, the boat was soon set on its proper

course and Wayne could tell from the way he handled it, there would be no problem making shore. The gods had been kind when they threw him in with Gelthor.

As the boat headed shoreward in the darkness, Wayne's mind was a maze of activity. He was free now and had a valuable helper in the form of Gelthor. But from what he now knew of Korus-tan it was going to be no easy matter to find Kayna, much less rescue her. In fact it was perfectly possible, though not likely, that she was not even in Korus-tan at all. He refused even to consider that possibility.

Soon the sound of water lapping against shore-line came to their ears. They had reached Pira and land. Gelthor explained that the point at which they were landing was some five miles south of the city and it was not likely that they'd encounter Krags here. They had enough to do patrolling the city without attempting to guard the entire coast-line. Occasionally searching parties of Krags foraged around the outskirts of the city but for the most part they were content to stay within its limits. Their success at taking the city under the leadership of Gothar had astonished most of them anyhow, though they had readily assumed the role of the conqueror.

When the boat touched the shore, Gelthor and Wayne jumped out, and dragged it into the narrow cove that concealed most landing places in this weird land.

Each armed with a longsword, the adventurers set out along the forested pathway toward Gelthor's hiding place. A few minutes' brisk walk brought them to Gelthor's hiding place, a small hovel constructed in a deeply wooded hollow. Certainly they were safe from detection now.

"Come in, Wayne," the old man said

and bent his wiry frame to stoop through the leafy entry. "You won't find much here, but we'll both be safe for a while at least if the Krag's don't find us."

"It suits me," agreed Wayne. "It's better than I imagined." He looked around at the barren little place. It was practically empty of furnishings, and it smelt strongly of fish, but withal, there was an air of homeliness about it that appealed to Wayne. The willingness and friendliness of Gelthor were not lost on Wayne either.

They seated themselves and had a drink of rich heady wine that the old man produced from his cellarette. He winked at Wayne:

"It'll help clear our heads for the work that's coming." He chortled to himself. "I want to slip more steel where it belongs—between Krag ribs."

"You'll get plenty of chance to do that," Wayne promised. "But right now we've got to figure a way for one of us to get into the city and find out where Kayna is and what our chances are of reaching her."

The old man sobered: "Yes," he agreed, "one of us will have to go. I had better do it because I'm more familiar with the city."

"No," Wayne countered, "I'll go. It's too dangerous for you and besides you might be recognized. You can coach me about all I'll have to know and you can draw me a rough map of the city."

AFTER much bickering over the point, Gelthor agreed to let Wayne make the first trip into the city. Gelthor spent a long time, a good portion of the night explaining to Wayne all the little details and courtesies that Wayne must be familiar with. Because Wayne, as a Piran, would not be able to wear a longsword, his only weapon was a

stiletto-like knife slipped into his loin-cloth. The old man carefully coached him into wearing a manner of cringing servility, the only attitude it was possible to maintain without getting into trouble with the Krag's.

"Don't stay more than a full day—at most two full days," the old man cautioned, "and when you come back here remember to take a devious route in case you're trailed. While you're gone I'll try and gather together all the Pirans that I know haven't been forced into slavery yet. At least those that aren't captured." He cackled grimly. "There are enough of them too. If all Pirans had had their courage, Korus-tan wouldn't be in the state it is, with those stupid Krag's acting as lords and masters."

Armed only with the dagger, Wayne set off the next morning very early for Korus-tan. Everywhere he could see evidence of the activities of the Krag's and the inactivities of the Pirans under their new rulers. Fields and isolated houses had fallen into disuse. Everywhere there were signs of neglect and lack of care. Activity was at a standstill. At least on the fringes of the city. Slaves do not work well unless the whips are right at hand. And the Krag's could not spare that many overseers.

There were burned buildings, mute evidence of the terrorism of the Krag's, inflicting such punishments on those who disobeyed them. Above all, the air was electric with the tension of an imprisoned people. The yoke was heavy and obvious.

Several times, Wayne passed parties of Pirans, heading into the countryside in work parties guarded by a few Krag's. At such times he hid until the gangs of men passed, and there was no danger of his being discovered. It hurt not to be able to do something. The Krag's were merciless in their treatment

of Pirans. They were liberal with their blows and beatings and the cowed heads of the Pirans made Wayne boil with rage and frustration at his impotence. But he calmed himself with the thought that it wouldn't be for long.

It didn't take very long for him to reach the city. His first sight of it astonished him. Surrounded by a crumbling stone wall, the city housed buildings of exceeding beauty and simplicity. Towering domes and minarets much like the Mohammedan style of his own time were arranged in clusters. Wayne saw well the high order of ability possessed by the Pirans and marveled that they had so easily been overcome. The brutish Krag could offer nothing of comparable quality in their whole primitive civilization.

Getting into the city was the next problem. Wayne skirted the walled area for some distance always keeping hidden and within the shadows. As nightfall rapidly approached he had another ally. So it was without much difficulty that he spotted a suitable entrance. It was a gap in the stone walls.

Once in the city Wayne pretended a boldness he didn't feel. He realized that an air of confidence might make him less suspect to any patrolling bands of Krag.

As he worked his way toward the center of Pira, he saw more and more evidence of the subdued and beaten peoples. Nevertheless, he was amazed at the fact that there was not too much confidence among the Krag. All the while there was never a lone Krag to be seen. They always traveled in twos and threes—often in much larger patrols. It was apparent that they feared that the Pirans might make ambush attempts.

Near the building which Wayne recognized as the former palace and now Krag headquarters, was another series

of smaller buildings. The Krag headquarters was well guarded. It looked impregnable.

Wayne surveyed the place from a hidden court across the street.

Near the castle was a small walled house, richly ornamented and evidently formerly belonging to one of the nobility. He noticed that there was little traffic through the gateway. He entered and kept within the shadow of bushes and trees always avoiding conspicuousness. He waited.

HIS patience was soon rewarded. A Piran was walking up the pathway toward the house. He was a young man, well set-up, but he too had the hang-dog look of the defeated about him.

Wayne thought swiftly. He wanted no outcry. He leaped out of the bushes, threw an arm around the other's neck, and dragged him back with him into the security of the verdure. He held his poniard to the throat of the cowering Piran.

"Don't be afraid," he whispered. "I won't hurt you but don't make any outcry. I just want to question you. Understand?"

The servitor nodded, the terrified and trapped look going out of his eyes. Wayne released his grip on the man's throat, gradually freeing him completely when he was sure that the man wouldn't raise a cry.

"I'm a Piran too," he said in opening. "You can trust me. First, will any Krag pass here soon?"

"No," the other answered tremulously, "no one will enter here for the next hour."

"Good. Now tell me—and I want the truth. Do you know the Princess Kayna?"

"Yes—I know her." Dumbly.

"Have you seen her brought into the

city by the Kraggs recently?"

"Yes—two days ago she was taken into the palace—and she hasn't been seen since. It is said that Gothar wants her."

Wayne's heart gave a jump. So she was in the city—and not only that—she was in the palace! This was better than he'd hoped.

"Is there any chance of getting into the palace?" he demanded.

"Yes," the other answered, "you can get in, but you can't get out. It's too heavily guarded. There are Kraggs everywhere." Now that he knew he wouldn't be killed, the man's courage started to return. "I don't know you," he said, "but you're wrong if you think I'm a traitor. I'm a Piran too and I've lived all of my life in Korus-tan. But I have to work for the Kraggs like all the men. How can we overthrow them? They're too many and they're armed. We aren't."

Wayne looked at him coldly.

"If you Pirans were more than fools, you'd fight no matter what the odds and you wouldn't let your women be the playthings of the Kraggs," he said, contempt in his voice.

"We fought," the other answered, "we fought like very devils, but somehow we had no organization and the Kraggs were everywhere that night. They were too many and they surprised us. Never in a thousand years did the Kraggs ever attempt an attack like that one."

The prisoner talked freely though Wayne retained his grip on the man and his knife-arm was at the ready for the slightest sign of treachery. It didn't take him long to realize, as the man talked, that he was sincere and speaking the truth. For the first time since he had seen the Pirans he began to understand the odds that had confronted them. Gelthor had been a little too

vindictive in condemning all Pirans so completely. Apparently they had put up a good fight when the Kraggs had attacked, but the odds were simply too great.

Wayne decided to take a chance. He could afford to trust this man, he thought, especially as the man talked so honestly and freely. Wayne learned a lot—at least all that the Piran could tell him. The situation was growing more intolerable day by day, it was clear, and sooner or later there was going to be a revolt. The Kraggs knew this, and very rarely went anywhere away from the mainstream of things without going in a sufficiently large body to prevent being ambushed.

They sensed the hatred that surrounded them and they knew it was but a question of time before the Pirans attempted to overthrow them.

Wayne learned these things not only from his conversation with the prisoner, but from his observation.

"There are many Pirans who haven't been taken by the Kraggs," he told the man, "and they're going to try to retake the city. Every man must be ready to fight like the gods when the time comes. I want you to spread the word around cautiously. Above all make sure that it does not reach the ears of the Kraggs or anyone sympathetic to them—"

"There are no Pirans sympathetic to the Kraggs," the man said enthusiastically. "All we're waiting for is a chance. You'll see when the time comes. Many of us have been tempted to revolt but without organization you know we'd be slaughtered like animals."

Wayne released his grip about the man completely.

"My name is Vanthor," the fellow said, "and I'll remember you when the time comes; believe me, we all want to help."

"I won't tell you when, Vanthor, be-

cause we don't know yet—but it will come," Wayne said warmly, "and when it does, all Pirans must be ready to jump the nearest Krag if they have to do it with their bare hands."

"We will." For the first time there was a smile on Vanthor's face.

Wayne let him go about his way knowing now that by means of the usual grapevine undoubtedly the word that revolt was possible—that there was a spark to ignite it—would go the rounds. At least hope would be aroused. That much had been accomplished.

## CHAPTER VII

THE question now was whether or not to try to get into the palace. Wayne wanted more than anything to see Kayna, to encourage her, to let her know that there were Pirans waiting for her release. The more he thought about the idea, the less he liked it. All that would be accomplished might be nullified if the Krag caught him—which was almost a certainty. He would wait, he decided. He could do more on the outside.

He left the walled garden and retraced his steps toward the city gate where he had entered. As he approached the gate, he noticed numbers of Krag standing near it. This would not do. They were permitting anyone to enter without questioning, but all who left were closely scrutinized, and some were interrogated, though no one was held. He couldn't take the chance. He would have to go over the wall.

Executing a quick search for a suitable spot, Wayne came across one of the numerous gaps in the wall. It was unguarded and he passed through it quickly now intent on returning to Gelthor and whatever the old man might have arranged.

Again he followed the road, often

ducking to one side to avoid parties of Pirans and Krag.

He kept his eyes sharply tuned for the sight of a lone Krag. Wayne wanted a longsword as evidence of his desire to fight when he met the men whom Gelthor by now should have assembled. Soon he spotted a lone Krag proceeding leisurely down the road. Wayne darted into a thicket alongside the road and waited until the man had passed. The Krag evidently did not feel at ease. He glanced around cautiously and often as if he expected ambush. He got it.

As soon as the sub-man had passed Wayne stole up behind him. His muscular arm hooked around the Krag's throat. There was a startled look, a grunt, and then the man's head dropped forward as Wayne eased eight inches of steel into the man's side. Wayne dropped him, stripped him of his shield and longsword and dragged the body into the bushes. Only then did he return to the trail.

Soon he was in sight of the old man's shelter. There seemed to be a great bustle and activity in and around it. While Wayne knew that undoubtedly these were Pirans he could take no chances. He crept cautiously closer. He could hear the old man's high shrill voice:

" . . . I don't know what we'll do exactly yet," it was saying, "but we're going to drive the Krag from Korustan, at any cost. And we can do it. Pirans are no cowards—" there was a confirmative mutter at this "—and if I were twenty years younger I'd do the job myself." The men laughed but good-humoredly, not in malice.

Wayne stepped forward into the group of men. There were only about thirty of them, he noticed with some dismay, but at least they would serve as the nucleus of a striking force. Gel-

thor broke off as Wayne approached and greeted him heartily.

"You're back, Wayne," he said, "and none the worse for the experience." His eyes spotted the shield and longsword. "But some Krag is, eh?" he laughed. He turned back toward the Pirans.

"Men, this is the warrior Wayne. He just came back from Korus-tan and he can tell you how rotted the city is under the Krag. All it will take is a push and the monsters and their rule will topple."

Wayne stepped up beside Gelthor.

"He's not wrong, men," he said addressing the group. "The Krag are afraid of their own shadow and even now they fear revolt. They've bitten off more than they can chew. They didn't know that capturing a city is one thing. Keeping it in slavery is another. All Korus-tan needs is a bunch of leaders to start the revolt. And you and I are going to be those leaders."

He stopped the formal talking and asked Gelthor to introduce him to the men. They were a rugged lot. Most of them were fishermen who had been on the broad bosom of the Korus Sea when the capture of the city had occurred and consequently they had managed to hide in the jungle and forest until now, hoping eventually to do something. They were rough and tough but Wayne instantly took a liking to them. They were fighting men and they could be trusted to give a good account of themselves when and if the battle started.

AFTER the introductions and a meager meal provided out of Gelthor's stores the parley began and different views were presented as to how the attack should be organized. Wayne considered the presentations and as the impromptu leader approved or vetoed what he thought good or bad.

After much talk a method of attack was agreed upon, thoroughly approved by all. Wayne told them what he had seen in the city. The Pirans were beginning to find the rule of the brutal Krag intolerable. But because they had no leaders, nor any chance to meet in groups, without being dispersed by Krag patrols, they had not taken things into their own hands.

"That's where we come into the picture," Wayne explained. "All of us will sneak into the city tonight under the cover of darkness. We'll go to every Piran that we can and explain that at three in the morning everyone is to attack the nearest Krag. All the Pirans we talk to will tell everyone they can to do the same thing. By this sort of chain action we can get the word to everyone. Then when the signal is given, not a Krag will be left alone. They're so poorly organized that they won't know what to do and we'll be able to beat the lot of them."

The whole group was in agreement with this. Already they were anxious to begin. Wayne agreed that they should start at once so as to have given the alarm to everyone possible before the actual attack began. In that way it would help the attack. But once the fighting started, Wayne knew there would be no question about it being taken up by every Piran hand that could hold a sword or axe.

The Pirans were to sneak into the city armed but to hide their weapons until ready for the fight. In case roaming patrols came upon them it would not do to be armed. The Krag might get suspicious.

Everything was carefully worked out. Even more enthusiastic than Wayne was Gelthor. He insisted on accompanying the attackers and doing his part. Wayne agreed. They could not have too many men for this work. It

was going to be a rough night.

Wayne insisted on keeping two Pirans with him, Phothan and Cormar. The three of them would separate and spread the word of the impending attack everywhere. Then they would bring a half-dozen men with them to meet Wayne at an appointed spot before the castle. All of them would then attempt to overwhelm the castle guards breaking in and arming any Pirans they might find there. It was Wayne's intention to lop off the head of the Krag—Gothar—and leave them leaderless as soon as possible.

With everything understood and clarified, the little band headed for Korus-tan. Wayne felt a thrill of anticipation creep up his spine. Here he was, leading an attack on a city existing he knew not where nor when!

The band of attackers met no opposition as they went toward Korus-tan. Nor were they seen. Whenever they encountered a Piran, they explained their plan to him, and he was enrolled into the band. By the time they had reached the city, the little group of thirty Pirans had swollen to forty.

Night had come again and it was no difficult problem to get into the city without being seen by the Krag. After getting over the wall and just before they scattered Wayne gave them an encouraging word.

"Our plan can't fail," he said, fire in his eyes, "if we all do our part. Remember it is for all Pira that we fight. For Pira and her Princess!"

The group softly echoed his words—"For Pira and her Princess!" and then they melted off into the dusk.

For endless hours it seemed, Wayne and his two cohorts, Phothan and Cormar, wandered over their section of the city spreading the word. At first they were greeted with incredulity—then enthusiasm. Every male old enough to

walk prepared for the great event. Wayne warned them that it wouldn't be too easy—they must first arm themselves—and above all, they must try, in the beginning at least, to attack only groups of Krag smaller in number than themselves. Nothing must jeopardize the plan. If it didn't succeed the first time, he stressed, there would be no second time.

The three of them roamed everywhere, dodging patrols of Krag, and spreading the fatal word. Hour after hour they did this. All over the city Wayne knew the same thing was happening. Even in the quiet darkness, he could feel, it seemed, the air of tension that gripped the very air. There was an electric something here, that boded no good for the Krag.

Several times, Wayne and his aides butchered lone Krag who came upon them, but there were not many. Few Krag ventured out alone—they too seemed to sense that living in Korus-tan was a far different thing than capturing it. Their atrocities and brutalities, their seizure of women and girls, had driven the Pirans frantic with hatred and frustration. All this would soon be released and it was as if the Krag knew it. Hence their uncommon caution.

Many times the three skulkers passed places of entertainment, filled with Krag laughing and drinking and joking, toying with Piran girls and mocking Piran slaves. The blood rose in Wayne's heart but he could afford to wait. Tempted as he was to stop the thing instantly, he naturally ignored the temptation.

**E**VENTUALLY they had spread the word around and the city was fully aroused though no Krag knew it. Wayne knew that lurking in a thousand doorways, waiting in a thousand hid-



ing places, were thousands of willing hands ready to strangle the first Krag they chanced on. Now that the city was poised for the supreme effort, Wayne felt better. In a few moments, if all went well, he would see Kayna. How he wanted to do that! More than anything now he realized that she was the primary motive for his doing anything. A month ago had he been told what he knew now, he would have laughed not so much as its impossibility of occurrence, but the ridiculousness of picturing him in a hero's role. But here he was. The thought continually startled him—but always vanished when he pictured Kayna's adorable face.

Crouching in the very garden where he had spoken with Vanthor, Wayne and his two companions heard a rustling sound. Hands on their longswords, they prepared to fight. There was no need to. The men that Phothan had spoken with, and those who had been talked to by Cormar, were assembling. Soon hidden in the little walled garden was a stout fighting force of eighteen men. Wayne figured that would be sufficient to break into the palace. They were armed with clubs fashioned from anything at hand but these crude weapons would soon be replaced with longswords and battleaxes taken from Krag. Besides, their enthusiasm and fighting temper made up for what they lacked in the way of weapons.

"Now this is what we'll do," Wayne explained to them. "It will be no trick for Phothan and myself to climb over the castle wall. Just give us a few minutes. We'll do in the guards—there are only three—quickly, open the gates and arm you somewhat better. From then on, it will be a free for all, with every man trying to arouse any Pirans he finds, and above all, butchering any Krag he can. I think they'll be pan-

ic-stricken but you know they can fight, so don't be over confident. All I ask is that you fight with your head and hands and heart. Remember, we must win. Cormar and I will immediately try to get into the dungeons and release the prisoners there. There are hundreds down there and they'll make a suitable addition to our fighting force—if they're able to walk," he added grimly.

Wayne's voice must have been louder than he thought, for hardly had he finished speaking when three Krag suddenly appeared in the doorway of the house in the garden. They looked around curiously. Longswords in hand they started walking down the path toward the spot where Wayne and his cohorts were concealed, behind the shrubbery.

Too late they saw motion in the bushes. A half-dozen Pirans leaped at them and before they could utter an outcry, they were chopped down. Their weapons were distributed and the little groups settled back once more.

They waited and waited. It seemed like an eternity. But finally the water clock in the tower of the Temple came around and there were three resounding strokes as the priest within beat three times against the hanging bell. The loud low notes swelled over the city. Peaceful Korus-tan was silent—but only for a moment.

As the last stroke died away, Wayne and his men dashed up and toward the castle. Hastily Wayne and Cormar were boosted over the wall. Wayne made the ten foot drop, landing cat-like on his feet followed an instant later by Cormar.

The three Krag watched astounded for a moment and stupefied at the sight of the two armed Pirans. But only for a moment. One jumped up and with a bull-like roar whipped out his blade and started for Wayne. Like a whiplash,



Wayne cut him down. Cormar chopped his man down and the two of them dropped the third man even as his voice screamed the alarm. Without hesitation, they threw open the gates and the fighting force welled in like a huge wave.

Wayne stopped a minute and listened. From beyond the castle walls, he heard with satisfaction sounds that indicated things were happening.

"It's working!" he shouted exultantly. "Come on, men!"

**E**IGHTEEN fighting machines, perfect human specimens, followed Wayne as he tore across the courtyard toward the castle entrance. But the noise and screams of the dying guards had been enough to arouse more Krag. A solid phalanx of them blocked the entrance.

Wayne and his warriors tore into them with the pent-up fury of the last few weeks. Swords and axes rose and fell. There was the clash of metal on metal, the thud of metal on leather, and the softer sound of metal on flesh, but this was smothered by the screams of wounded and dying Krag and Pirans. Bitterly and fiercely the battle for the entrance waged, but the courage and audacity of the attackers was not to be denied.

An evil Krag's face appeared before Wayne. He split it to the chin and the fellow dropped, only to be replaced by another. Wayne cut him down even as a thrust from the man's blade nicked his arm. It drew blood but Wayne hardly felt it.

As fast as a Krag fell another took his place. Nor did the Pirans escape scot-free. Wayne glanced over his shoulder and noted with alarm that his band had dwindled sharply. But even as he saw this, slaves were pouring from their sleeping places. Unarmed or

armed with table-legs and clubs they tore into the fray joyously, chopping down Krag after Krag.

For endless minutes the fracas raged. Gradually the formal lines of attacker and defender intermingled until the whole battle resolved itself into little groups of men or into single combats. But it was still too concentrated for Wayne to tear himself free to do what he wanted.

And he knew that every minute of delay was dangerous. Not so much for the general course of the battle but for Kayna. He had to get to her and soon.

As soon as he would try to thread his way through the writhing struggling groups of Pirans and Krag, he would find his path blocked by a hulking Krag who seemed to sense he was the leader and who tried his best to cut him down. But Wayne was no longer the objective scientist of yesterday. He was purely and simply a fighting mechanism geared to wield longsword and axe with deadly ferocity.

Wayne found himself face to face with a deadly swordsman. The Krag was unusually skilled. Wayne's first impulsive attack, wielding his blade like a sabre, got him nowhere and for a minute the Krag's riposte threatened to spit him like a chicken on a barbecue stick. Barely in time, he parried the deadly thrust and countered but the other was guarded by a weaving net of steel. The Krag grinned in the joy of combat.

"Here, Piran," he jeered, "eat steel!" And his blade shot neatly toward Wayne's head. Instinctively he parried it, saving his skin by a fraction of an inch. His counter thrust was in turn deflected by the Krag. Infuriated by his failure to cut the Krag down, Wayne blundered into a crude attack that almost was his undoing. He overslid himself in a lunge and his foot slipped

in a pool of blood. He went down.

Eyes gleaming exultantly, the Krag brought his longsword down in a sweeping stroke intended to split Wayne from his head to his middle. Wayne crawled forward on his knees and his left hand. Blindly he thrust upward with his right. He felt the blade sink into the Krag's flesh and the down-coming longsword clipped him lightly—comparatively—alongside the head. Everything went black for a moment. He shook his head and staggered to his feet. He looked around. The fight was raging as furiously as ever, yet he sensed victory in the room. More and more Pirans had joined the fray.

"Cormar!" Wayne shouted. He looked again as the Piran put the finishing stroke to a Krag and in an instant was at his side.

"We can make it now, Wayne," the man said. "I'll lead the way. Cover my back."

"Fine," Wayne said. "You've been here before. You ought to know the way to the dungeons."

"I've spent enough time in them," the other grinned. "I should know."

This time Wayne and Cormar managed to get through the press of fighters and they were not molested as they raced through the halls. Evidently, Wayne was quick to notice, the Krag had pulled all their fighting men into the entrance hall, staking all on stopping the Pirans there.

KNOWINGLY, Cormar led him to the stone steps leading down into the pits. An awful stench of corruption and decay rose in his nostrils as he went down the stairway. Dampness and cold and gloom radiated from the very walls. Before a huge stone door stood a half dozen Krag. They were talking among themselves, and Wayne could hear them deciding among themselves

whether or not to leave their post and join the fighting.

Wayne and Cormar hurled themselves at the six Krag like the very furies. Before the startled barbarians knew what had happened two of their number were down.

But the other four were not to be taken lightly. They had been picked for their job and they fought well. Wayne and Cormar were an impossible combination, though. Fired by every motive that makes a man human, they were irresistible and their weapons flashed like beams of light. One—two—! The remaining two dropped their swords and ran.

"Don't bother to chase them, Cormar," Wayne insisted. "Help me open this thing."

Cormar stripped the keys from one of the dead jailors. In an instant they had opened the lock and then it took the two of them to swing open the heavy stone gate.

Wayne bounded through the half-open door.

"Kaynal!" he screamed, "where are you, darling?"

There was no answer.

Then from the sepulchrous depths of the tomb-like room, a feeble voice muttered:

"My daughter is not here."

Wayne dashed for the cell from which the voice emanated. Cormar was opening other cells and releasing from them staggering wrecks who looked as though they were near starvation—which they were.

"Who are you?" Wayne asked as he fumbled to open the cell.

"I am Thanor, the ruler of Korus-tan." The man was weak and old and hungry and his eyes were filled with tears. Quickly Wayne explained who he was.

"Now answer me quickly," he de-

manded. "Where is Kayna? I must find her."

"She has been taken by Gothar," the old man answered slowly, "and by now she may be dead."

"Where did he take her, man? Answer! I must find her."

"He took her through a secret passageway leading from the dungeon to the forest." The effort to talk was too much for the old man and he collapsed, unconscious from hunger and fatigue, in Wayne's arms. Wayne turned to question another prisoner. Feebly the man pointed to the opposite corner of the dimly lit chamber. Wayne saw a half-open door of stone.

"I'm going to follow him, Cormar," he said. "Tell Gelthor where I went."

"I'll let out the rest of these prisoners and then follow you, Wayne," Cormar answered.

Wayne went through the stone doorway into the tunnel. It was in stygian blackness. He stumbled along it slowly after he had fallen down a half-dozen times in his eagerness. It was less than five feet high and the floor was uneven. It was ankle-deep in dirt and dust and Wayne choked and coughed as he made his way along it. It seemed endless. For almost an hour he followed the tunnel. Then he was rewarded by the sight of light and the sudden feeling of a rising floor. Speedily he hurled himself forward. When he emerged from the opening, Wayne found himself deep in the luxurious jungle vegetation. But the path of the abductor and the abducted was perfectly clear.

Wayne examined the grass. It was trampled and pressed. Gothar's huge splay feet were detectable. Kayna's delicate foot-imprint was visible also. Filthy, covered with sweat and blood and dirt and looking more like a Krag than a Piran, he made his way along the trail. Here and there were signs

of a struggle. Bits of torn cloth indicated Kayna had continued to fight the Krag.

Every now and then Kayna's footprints disappeared, indicating that the Krag had beaten her into unconsciousness and then carried her. Weak and hungry and exhausted from the night's battle and wild activity, Wayne stumbled along, only half-seeing the trail and conscious of but one thing. He must find Kayna! He must! He must! He told himself that a hundred times.

Every frayed nerve in his body screamed for him to rest. His hunger and thirst were hideous pains that gradually subsided into sensations of dull numbness along with the dozens of other aches and pains that were a part of him.

The running and walking and brushing into trees and bushes, the stumbling and stumbling that he did, tore open the blood-caked cuts that netlaced his body and he felt as if he must die if he dared take another step. Yet Wayne forced himself to continue.

Suddenly it was ended. He saw the broad expanse of the Korus stretching before him. He followed the footprints to the narrow beach and even as he stumbled forward he knew he had failed. There was the mark of a keel in the sand. Wayne looked out over the sea. In the remote distance he could see a boat, an ever-diminishing spec on the horizon. Bitterly Wayne cursed. His longsword clenched in his fist, he raised it to the sky.

"I'll find you, Kayna—and you, Gothar!" He shrieked in rage and frustration—and then collapsed.

## CHAPTER VIII

WAYNE came to, a mass of bruises and aches and his body seemed on

fire. He looked up, the effort of opening his eyes intolerable. Gelthor and Cormar were bending over him, pouring water on him.

"Gothar got away with Kayna," he said dully.

"We know," Gelthor cackled. "Here, drink this. And eat this."

They forced water and fruit on him and in a few minutes Wayne felt as if he were alive once more. He sat up, and in spite of his aching body, he knew that he must do one thing.

"Gelthor," he said, "we can't lose any time. Where is the nearest boat?"

"It's only a short distance down the beach. I'll go with you," the old man answered kindly. "You're not a true Piran, remember?"

Wayne smiled. Some of the fury and anger began to subside. He was able to think rationally again. He and the old man started toward the direction of the boat. Wayne spotted it in the sand, its prow tied to a tree.

"Cormar," he said, as the three of them walked toward the boat, "just Gelthor and myself will go. You can go back to the palace and report what has happened. I imagine the King will get searching parties organized too. Incidentally, how did the fighting in the city go?"

"Ask Gelthor, Wayne. I was with you, remember?"

"I must be dopier than I look," Wayne said wryly. "How did it go in Korus-tan, Gelthor?"

"The Krag's are being butchered now—what's left of them," the old man said gleefully. "We cut them off from the wharves too and not many got away. It was fun for a while to see the beasts trying to escape the trap."

"I don't imagine many will get away," Wayne said, "Too many Pirans remember their women. If I had only known about that secret passage."

"I feel that way, too," Cormar said ruefully. "I was in that dungeon many times and I didn't know about the passageway. I don't think even the King knew about it until now. Pirans used the dungeon only for a short while."

"Well, it's too late to cry over it now," Wayne admitted.

The three of them untied and launched the boat. It had the usual quota of iron rations, which Gelthor supplemented with fruit and in a few minutes he and Wayne were aboard it. The old man attended to rigging the lateen sail and soon Cormar was merely a dot on the narrow beach.

All through the day the craft bore them onward, but not once did they catch sight of the Krag and his precious cargo. Vainly Wayne scanned the sea hours on end, but there was no glimpse of them to be had.

Gelthor and he rigged every bit of cloth available that would serve to speed them and the little craft cut through the water at a great rate. After a time instead of cursing his fate Wayne accepted their position philosophically and he spent the time discussing the best method of finding the Krag and Kayna.

It was agreed that it was a hopeless task almost, after they had talked about it thoroughly. In that vast expanse of jungle, at whose magnitude Wayne could only guess, what chance was there of finding the two people he wanted?

Gelthor suggested that Gothar would try to find other Krag's and link up with them.

"I don't think so," Wayne said speculatively, toying with the hilt of his longsword. "He wants Kayna, but he's apparently civilized enough not to attack her. He'll probably try to be alone with her as much as possible. If he only knew what a small chance he

has of seducing her. Kayna, mate with a beast-man! It's unthinkable."

"It sounds logical," Gelthor agreed amiably, "especially when I stop and think that Gothar is not stupid. He knows by now that Pirans will start hunting down any groups of Kraggs they can find. I imagine he'll stay away from any large groups because they'll be the most obvious target of our men."

"Suppose then," suggested Wayne, "that I go inland while you parallel me along the coast. I'll work fairly well inland and you keep just offshore. Then any time I want, I can reach you, or at least be within range."

"I'll do that," the old man agreed, "but remember, I don't want to be picked up by any remaining Krag patrols. There are lots who haven't heard what has happened in Korus-tan. And until we clean the seas, it won't be too safe. Not that I'm afraid, Wayne—but I do want to live."

"No, no," Wayne protested, "don't take any chances. If you think there is any danger of being picked up by the Kraggs, run for it and forget about me. I'll hunt for that monster if it takes an eternity."

"I'll try and stay around as long as possible, Wayne," Gelthor assented. "Don't worry about it, anyway."

**IT TOOK** them several days before the shores of that unknown jungle appeared. Wayne had recovered admirably during the trip and was feeling more like himself. The scars of battle were healing well and he chafed to be off into the jungle. As futile as the pursuit seemed, it was at least an activity, and perhaps it was not so fruitless at that when he considered Gothar's nature.

As soon as they reached shore, Wayne slipped on his longsword, heft-

ed his small bag of provisions—he would eat and live off the jungle—Kayna had taught him enough about that—and then started into the thickets. He said good-bye to Gelthor and there was a wrenching at his heart. Wayne had come to like the crochety old man. It was entirely possible that he wouldn't see him again.

Before he penetrated into the jungle, he showed Gelthor the direction he had decided to take, so that the old man would be able to parallel his course. Then he set off.

As before, the going was hard. He came upon no trails and penetrating the jungle thicknesses was not easy, even though his longsword served as an excellent machete. For a week or more Wayne pursued his course, never exactly sure of his directions, but determined to proceed ahead regardless. For a while the journey seemed nightmarish. But gradually the inherent and previously atrophied sense of woods-manship that Wayne possessed took firm hold and he moved through the jungle smoothly and craftily.

As Kayna had pointed out wild animals were rare and he encountered none, but neither did he catch any sight of Gothar or Kayna.

He decided to turn seaward again and talk with Gelthor once more. His hastily conceived plan appeared utterly futile.

He turned to his right which was the direction of the sea as well as he could remember it. He was surprised at the depth to which he had penetrated. But eventually he came to the shores of Korus-tan. He scanned the sea for sight of Gelthor. Not a spec showed. Nowhere was there sign of the little craft's lateen-rigged sail.

Scrubbing himself in the fresh seawater and hacking off his beard with the razor he carried, Wayne felt re-

freshed but depressed. For the first time since he had been thrown into Pira, he wished he were not there. But he brushed away the thought as fast as it appeared to him.

He waited a full day, and by nightfall his patience was rewarded. A boat was coming toward the shore. Unthinkingly he waved and shouted as soon as it came within range. To his horror, he saw that it was full of Krag. He turned and ran into the jungle as the boat rapidly came toward the spot where he had been.

Hiding and concealing himself carefully, he watched the brutes disembark and to his surprise, he saw Gelthor. The old man was a sorry sight. He looked beaten and weary and his hands were tied behind his back.

Wayne knew he could easily slip off into the jungle and the Krag would not be able to find him, but he knew equally well that he would never do that. Patiently he waited and watched.

He counted eight Krag. They were all armed. They did not keep a very close watch on the old man. As confident as Wayne was of his ability, he would not dare try to beat all eight of them. Calmly he waited in a tree perch until night, for the Krag gave up looking for the wild figure they had seen waving its arms on the shore.

When night came, Wayne noticed that the old man lay to one side of a fire. One Krag remained on guard duty while the rest slept. This was simple.

Cat-like Wayne crept up toward the guard. The brute did not hear a sound. Wayne's blade separated his head from his body.

He crept over to Gelthor, always on the alert lest he waken any of the sleeping Krag. They did not know how close they were to death. One move on any of their parts and that man would

join his forebears.

Gelthor was overjoyed to see Wayne. His face beamed when Wayne cut his bonds, but he said nothing. A few minutes later after Gelthor's circulation returned, the two skulkers had reached the boat and shoved it from the cove. Wayne laughed to himself when he thought of the sorry plight of the Krag when they discovered the missing boat.

AS SOON as they were safe and could talk, Wayne told Gelthor of his experiences, the complete and total failure to find any sight of Kayna. Gelthor explained that he had been overtaken by the herd with which Wayne had found him.

"Gelthor," Wayne said, leaning his head in his hands, "I'm not going to give up this search. I don't expect you to spend the rest of your time wasting it with me. Take me further down the coast, and I'll disembark and I'll repeat the process. Regardless of how long it takes, I'll find Kayna. What horrors that girl must be going through!"

"Of course, I'll take you down the coast, Wayne," Gelthor said sympathetically, "but I won't desert you. And don't despair, man. Right, I'll bet there are hundreds of small craft patrolling the sea. The Korus is big, but you can be sure Gothar is not on it. Therefore he must be in the jungle somewhere. Thannor will send plenty of searching parties there too. You see, Wayne—" the old man put his hand on Wayne's shoulder, —"Kayna will be found. Be patient."

"You're right," Wayne agreed. "It's just that I can't bear the thought of her with Gothar. From what I've been told about him—by you—he's intelligent as well as brutal. That's why I fear he's going to be almost impossible to find."

"He'll be found. Stop worrying."

Gelthor let Wayne off the next morning quite a few miles farther down the coast as he requested. Again he hovered offshore going up and down with the boat, keeping careful watch against the possibility of encountering any more Krag.

Wayne resumed his usual endless trek inland. Under the piercing, intense jungle sun, the jungle became a steaming morass of humidity. The direct light of the sun couldn't penetrate the jungle but it could and did make a miserable oven of it, compounded with moisture.

Half-blinded by his own sweat, Wayne stumbled along, his eyes despite their fatigue never leaving the trail for an instant, constantly searching for signs of Gothar.

He had proceeded in this way for several hours, when he had the uncanny feeling that he had been along this trail before. Then it came to him! Of course he had traveled this path. A diligent search disclosed the barest traces of blade-marks on a few trees, blade-marks that he had placed there when he first met Kayna after coming to this unknown land.

A host of memories were stirring within him. What if he came upon the spot where he had landed? Had Dr. Graves forgotten him? If Kayna was gone would it not be better to return to his own time? A host of questions ran through his mind.

Suddenly his head jerked erect. He listened. He heard the sound of voices. No, it was impossible. He must be hearing things. That couldn't be Kayna. He walked farther along the leafy path. As he burst through a clearing in the jungle, he saw two figures standing three hundred feet away! One was an almost naked girl, dirty, and fatigued, standing before a Krag. It was

Kayna and Gothar.

Wayne's heart leaped into his mouth! This was it. But even as he saw the two, they saw him. The girl half-turned. Wayne could see her mouth open as she started to shout.

"Way—" she called, and the name was broken off as the Krag reached out and struck her unconscious with a mighty blow from his clenched fist. Wayne saw the sub-man catch the falling girl, flip her over his shoulder, and race into the jungle.

The whole tableau had taken seconds. Even as Wayne reacted with hatred, even as the rage surged through, the girl-carrying Krag vanished into the jungle. Wayne set out after him instantly, certain that he would catch the laden Krag within minutes. But he underestimated the strength of the brute.

LIVING in the jungle as Gothar had been doing, had made him a superbly muscled machine. And Krag's were never weaklings. Spurred by the thought of pursuit and fearful lest Wayne have cohorts, Gothar urged himself along without respite. His desire for the girl was so great that he would not leave her go. After she came to, he even prodded her into running before him, using the tip of his longsword as a goad. Almost exhausted, but driven by fear for both herself and Wayne, Kayna stumbled along. The chase was a nightmare that seemed endless.

Several hundred yards in the rear, Wayne kept up a relentless pursuit. Even though he had the wings of hope, the tangled underbrush made his progress like a snail's pace, it seemed to him.

After the first hour, the pace of the pursued slackened. Gothar could easily escape if he chose to abandon the girl. He knew that in all likelihood Wayne

would not even follow him. But his beaten ego would not permit it. He had lost a kingdom through the interference of this fellow. He would not lose a princess. And besides, somewhere in his strangely primitive—yet advanced—mind there lurked a feeling for this girl that his savage intellect was not fully capable of describing. Call it lust, call it desire, even call it "love." Regardless, Gothar would not give up.

But he could not win the chase. Wayne knew that. Every so often he would catch a glimpse of the fleeing figures and his heart would bound with joy. It was only a matter of minutes now.

Soon Wayne was only scores of yards behind the two figures. At that instant Gothar and Kayna stumbled into a jungle clearing. This was to be it! Gothar decided the issue. Knowing the courage of the girl, he dared not risk her intervention in any fighting which was certain to come now. His fist lashed out again. It caught the unfortunate loveliness of Kayna across the side of the head. She dropped, completely out. The stunned and beaten girl was out of the picture now.

Calmly Gothar waited for the approaching Wayne. Wayne broke into the clearing. At last! He saw the magnificent figure of the Krag. Gothar faced him with drawn longsword. Wayne's own blade was in his hand.

"Prepare yourself for death," Wayne said, breathing heavily after the exhausting trek, "prepare to die. I am going to carve you into little bits of flesh and the jungle ants will strip your bones."

The Krag threw back his head and uttered his thunderous mocking laugh.

Sardonically, he bent in the caricature of a bow. He whipped his longsword through the air until it whis-

tled, as it reflected the sun's light."

"Little man," he said mockingly, "it is you who will die. The swordsman doesn't live who can beat Gothar."

Wayne was forced to admire the calmness and self-confidence of the brute even as his brain seethed with hatred and desire for revenge. He stepped forward, his longsword on guard.

The instant that the blades touched, Wayne knew that he was facing a man of no mean ability. At the first touch of steel on steel, he felt the nervous, delicate, sensing of a swordsman's arm. Here was no crude hacker, but a man who knew what a point was for.

Confident as he was, Gothar played with Wayne's blade in an effort to find the caliber of man against him. The past few weeks had made Wayne a master, too, and Gothar sensed it at once.

Circling each other cautiously, their blades licking out in tentative, testing thrusts, probing each other's defenses, the sub-man and Wayne made a magnificent picture of barbaric splendor.

The only sounds were the harsh breathing of the combatants, the clink of steel on steel, and the rustle of the grass beneath their sandaled feet. Otherwise the jungle was silent.

As soon as he had taken the temper of the man, Wayne opened the attack. His blade licked out in a long lean lunge, his arm and body moving with the speed and accuracy of a striking snake. Even as he lunged Wayne was aware, out of the corner of his eye, of the fallen body, now lying prone, of Kayna. The sight acted as a whip to his senses.

C OOLLY and calmly and with equal speed, Gothar's blade moved sideways three inches in a parry whose speed was no less than Wayne's lunge,



and Wayne's blade slithered harmlessly to one side. In the same movement, Gothar enveloped Wayne's blade in a counter parry and Wayne was forced to recover his lunge and step back.

A smile appeared on Gothar's face. He opened his own lightning attack. For a while Wayne faced a wall of shimmering steel from which stabbing points darted. Only by the dint of calling on his every reserve was he able to keep Gothar's licking, seeking blade from his body.

At the last pass of steel, the barbarian's tip nicked Wayne's shoulder and blood started to trickle from the wound. Again Gothar smiled, an evil smile of both anticipation and satisfaction.

Twice more in as many minutes the Krag opened whirlwind attacks. Wayne met them all with a steel curtain of his own, but again in spite of his best, Gothar's blade exacted another touch, this time on Wayne's left arm.

Wayne had been retreating steadily until his back was almost to the jungle wall. He could go no farther. He made a supreme effort to take the initiative. In a furious yet strategic offense, he drove the Krag back toward the center of the clearing. Once he drew blood which bothered the Krag not at all.

The swords were never still a moment. Gradually Wayne allowed his defense to weaken and the Krag saw his chance. The Piran was weakening. Now he must press home the attack! Now! In a whirlwind of flashing steel, Gothar tore into Wayne. For a brief flickering moment, Wayne gave ground.

Gothar's blade, driven with the full force of his body, came at Wayne's chest. There seemed to be no hope of parrying or evading the forceful lunge. Wayne dropped to both knees as the blade shot for him. At the same time he shot his body forward and upward.

His longsword blade sank into Gothar's belly and upward through his vitals. The Krag chieftain screamed one loud shriek of agony. He stumbled backward, wrenching Wayne's blade with his body, and then fell to the ground spilling out his life as he did.

Almost exhausted, Wayne staggered to his feet. He had done the job. The Krag was dead.

Dragging his enervated body to the still form of Kayna, Wayne gathered her to his arms.

"Darling," he whispered, covering her dirt-streaked face with kisses, "are you all right? Talk to me. Please, Kayna, say something!"

The girl's eyelids fluttered. She looked up. For the first time in what seemed like ages she saw Wayne's face instead of the brutal visage of Gothar the sub-man.

Her arms stole out around Wayne's neck and she clung to him.

"My Wayne," she murmured, "my prince."

Wayne's arms tightened around her and they clung to each other for many minutes. Their lips sought each other's hungrily and like all young lovers they forgot their world.

At last Wayne gently disengaged her arms from around his neck.

"You must have rest and care, Kayna," he said.

"I'll be all right as soon as I have some food and sleep," she said. There was a smile of utter happiness on her sorely bruised and beaten face. She was sensitive to the slightest touch. "For a while I forgot how much I hurt," she said, "when you held me in your arms, Wayne."

"You poor thing," Wayne said, his eyes taking in the marks of the brutal treatment she had received.

Very practically he gave her food and water from his little supply sack.

Then he suggested they rest a while.

"Kayna," he said in explanation, "Gelthor, a Pira fisherman whom I've come to know and like well, is waiting offshore for us with a boat. As soon as we're rested we'll go back to Korus-tan with him. I'm sure your father will be glad to see you."

"Of course, Wayne," Kayna said, snuggling up to him and grimacing gingerly every time she bumped a bruise, "you remember that it was you who did all this. Tell me what happened after you were captured."

WAYNE told her the whole story, playing down his own part as leader of the revolt, but Kayna did not fail to understand. Under his matter-of-fact words she easily sensed exactly who had been responsible for the whole thing.

Wayne wanted to know what had happened to her.

"When I was captured and taken from you, darling," she answered, "I was taken before Gothar. He wanted me. He even offered me to share his throne—" she laughed at the ridiculousness of the offer— "and when I refused he threw me in the dungeons with my father and many other Pirans. We waited there until the revolt started. We could get an idea of the seriousness of the affair by the fear of our guards. At last Gothar came down to the cell and forced me to go with him through that secret passage—"

"I know about that," Wayne interrupted grimly.

"—where he went to the beach and found a boat. You know the rest. We wandered through the forest endlessly. He was continually looking for more Kraggs and when he failed to find any he was enraged. And he always tried to make love to me. I succeeded in fighting him off, but I couldn't have

much longer. Oh Wayne, I'm so happy."

Suddenly Wayne saw a startled look of surprise on Kayna's lovely face. He wondered for a moment what she was looking at. Then he turned around abruptly. He saw the shimmering haze and a multitude of thoughts surged through him.

It came to him then in a flash. They were in the same clearing that Wayne had been in when he arrived in Pira and met Kayna!

For a moment Wayne didn't know what to think. Then the flood gates of his mind opened and the memories of what had gone before came to him.

As he looked at the shimmering blue haze that hovered in the center of the clearing, he knew that Dr. Graves had not forgotten him. Somewhere and at some time, Dr. Graves was sitting in his laboratory, desperately worried about Wayne's disappearance. Here was the opportunity to eliminate that worry.

As Wayne watched the blue light, it flickered and flared, alternately increasing and decreasing. His head seemed to swell and contract with it. What should he do?

The problem that confronted him seemed insoluble. He could simply step through the veil, explain his plight and return to Kayna. That would be the logical thing to do. But what guarantee had he that he would return to the same place and time? Well, the fact that the haze was floating here and now was the guarantee. Could he afford to take the chance?

"Kayna," Wayne said turning to the girl, who gazed at him sympathetically and who could see the terrific struggle going on in his mind, "I don't expect you to understand this, but believe me. I have a chance to go back to my world. But I love you, Kayna, and I will never leave you. Would you want

to come with me to my world?"

"I will do whatever you wish, Wayne."

He thought and thought. Would little savage Kayna truly fit in the artificial world of a twentieth-century university? Would she be happy away from all the things she knew and loved?

And would he be happy here? That problem filtered through his mind too. Here he was, a professor of physics, a scientist who had spent most of his life living the most artificial life that could be lived, living purely in the abstract. Would he want to live as a semi-savage the rest of his life? Then he recalled how well he had fitted into this strange world. He glanced toward the dead body of Gothar. Yes, he fitted very well into this world.

Wayne looked at the shimmering haze. He looked at Kayna, whose lovely eyes were filled with tears. He picked up a leaf. With the tip of his longsword he scratched the words, "I'm staying—Wayne." With a branch he placed it in the bluish corona. It vanished. He turned his back on the bluish haze. Someone would have to be hurt and it wasn't going to be Kayna.

He bent down.

"Kayna," he said softly, "are you well enough to leave this clearing? We must meet Gelthor as soon as possible."

Kayna's tear-filled eyes brightened. She smiled and drew his head down to hers.

"I'm glad, my darling," she said, "I'm very glad."

Without looking behind, Wayne and Kayna walked from the clearing.

THE END



Where science fiction fan clubs get together.

Conducted by ROG PHILLIPS

THE year 1948 is over. When I look over the stack of fanzines sent me for review during the past year, and consider how much time was spent publishing them, I realize that fandom is something real and full of energy. Undirected energy, like that spilling over a waterfall, but energy.

That stack of fanzines has given me many hours of very enjoyable reading. It's brought me lots of friends, too. I hope the year 1949 will be as fruitful.

One thing, in looking at that stack of fanzines, I wonder how it would be possible to pick out the one article, story, or letter, printed in them, that is better than all the others, so that it unquestionably deserves first prize in the awards for fan activity for this year.

This column, the Club House, is going to award a hundred dollars in prizes for something in those fanzines—or maybe in fanzines whose editors

didn't send them in for this department to review, for some reason or other.

There is to be a fifty dollar first prize, a twenty-five dollar second prize, and ten one-year subscriptions to *Amazing Stories*. Twelve prizes.

The only requirement for any item to be eligible for these prizes is that it was published in some fanzine during 1948, and that the subscribers of that fanzine vote it the best in that fanzine during the year. No fanzines are barred.

As an extreme example, Joe Jones published one issue of a fanzine of his own during 1948 and didn't send me a copy for review. He didn't send it out for others to read, either. Also he wrote everything in it himself. He decides one of his short stories in it is the best, and since he is all the readers, it is voted the best of the year in that fanzine.

He sends in the fanzine and submits that story as an entry in this contest. I will accept it as an

entry. Originally I had stipulated that it would have to be printed in someone else's fanzine; but it was pointed out to me that that was hardly fair, since it would force fan editors to give their best work away to other fan editors to use. So material written by the editor of a fanzine, appearing in his own fanzine, is eligible.

Also, if I were to start saying a fanzine had to have so many subscribers, and publish so many issues during the year, I would be cutting out what might prove to be the best items.

So the only restriction I've retained is that the entries must have appeared in some fanzine during 1948, and be voted best of the year for that fanzine. Any fanzine can submit more than one best, also. For example, *Spacewarp*, which comes out every month and has lots of good items and also lots of readers, might submit twelve items its readers think the best twelve of the year. "*Tideflats*, the sea level fanzine, written when the tide was out," might have no readers and only one issue with three items in it. I would be justified in refusing to accept more than one item from it as the best of the year. And in any case all submitted items will compete fairly for first prize.

The decisions of the editors of the individual fanzines on what is submitted will be final. So if you had something in a fanzine during 1948 and you think it should be in the contest, you will have to work on the editor of the fanzine it was in, not me.

The OBJECT of this prize contest is to encourage fan writers to submit material to the various fanzines. I don't know how well it's succeeded. It may not have succeeded at all, in which case it won't be renewed. If the results are satisfactory the same prizes will be offered for material in fanzines during 1949.

We'll wait until we see the results before making that official. It's up to you fan editors. If only two or three fan editors send in their entries the prizes will be awarded as promised, but the contest will be discontinued.

How and when the awards will be made remains to be determined. There is an Award Committee being formed, with Raymond J. Van Houten as secretary, which plans something with a larger scope and a more representative and authoritative way of choosing the prize winners than this magazine could produce. The decisions on the winners may be made by that committee.

First of all, though, the final entries must be sent to me at Box 671, Evanston, Illinois. The fanzine the item appears in must be sent in, together with a letter from the fanzine's editor stating that is the item submitted for the contest.

\* \* \*

In the pre-organizational report on the formation of a committee of awards and commendations for meritorious work in the production of science-fiction, fantasy, and weird fiction, there is listed the opinions of various pro editors and fans on such a thing. These opinions range from en-

thusiasm to outright skepticism.

Every one of these opinions are justified to a certain extent. There is the already existent Laureate Awards of the National Fantasy Fan Federation. Some of the opinions were that this would duplicate those awards. The drawback to the N.F.F.F. awards is, of course, that they are organizational, and you have to belong to something to have a voice.

The goal aimed at by the Eastern Science Fiction Association, as nearly as I can gather, is that any award committee formed for this should be fan-wide, and not confined to any group. In order to have any value it must of course be representative and broad enough to make the awards mean something.

I think myself that there should be something solid to classify fandom. What classifies a person as a fan? So far as I can find out, every fan subscribes to at least one fanzine. Not all readers of science-fiction are fans, and not all fans read science-fiction. Some fans insist they aren't fans, and—according to some—some people who aren't fans insist they are.

Suppose it were decided that a fan is someone who subscribes to a fanzine. That would probably take in every fan who thinks of himself or herself as a fan. Then if some individual or group were to set up a sort of fan mailing list, and each fan editor were to co-operate to the extent of sending in his subscription list, there would be a central agency where the names and addresses of all fans were available.

If that agency existed, it would be a simple matter to get complete representation on voting in fandom, and get results that would mean something.

Would that be a good thing? There would be lots of bad things about it as well as good; but the bad things would be unimportant. Commercialization of the mailing list could easily be prohibited—unless only one person could be found to keep the list up to date, and that person refused to keep the list out of the clutches of mail order merchants.

Perhaps the worst thing about such a list would be that it would never be completely up to date. The next worst thing would be crusades to get somebody's name struck off the list in one of the periodic attempts to expel someone from fandom.

There is also the danger of fandom becoming too closely organized. Organization means acting as a unit, and forcing the minority to seemingly endorse the activities and policies of the majority.

It could be a good thing, though, if an award committee agreeable to all of fandom could be formed, and for the purposes of polling only, it could get a complete list of all actifans each year, brought up to date, and get the opinions of that list on what are the best stories and best of other things of that year.

Possibly ninety percent of all actifans read *Amazing Stories* occasionally. I know of only one

real fan who prides himself on NOT reading *Amazing*. If some definite agency for polling opinion is formed, I would be glad to place a blank in the Club House for fans to fill out and send to this agency so that they could receive voting blanks to express their opinions.

I would not be willing to do that, however, if the agency were an irresponsible element, and the poll was of a type that would not be a credit to fandom as a whole. Voting on who is worst fan, etc., is all right for any small group having fun, but anything representative of the whole of fandom should be sensible. Otherwise it won't be of any value.

Up to now no attempt to unite fandom on any single thing has ever succeeded. Probably it never will. But if fandom can be united for the purpose of determining each year the best of everything, from stories in promags to individual fan achievement, I'm for it a hundred percent.

The pages of the Club House are open to Mr. Van Houten and the award committee to facilitate their efforts to form a mechanism for giving awards that have real meaning that can come only from broad representation.

\* \* \*

A letter comes in from a young fan in San Francisco who asks me to print the following announcement:

\* \* \*

Attention young stf fans:

Are you interested in forming a group of corresponding young fans?

Would you like to exchange ideas and discuss stories, authors and events with those interested?

How would you like lists of dealers in second-hand mags for your collection of promags?

Do yours laugh at you when you mention rocket ships, etc.?

Seriously, fellows, the foregoing is pretty corny but things shape up this way; the average science fiction reader is an adult. I know lots of you kids read fantasy. Now, if enough write in, you can get a chance to write, perhaps visit, other youthful fans. In time you may become an author or an actfan.

I'm a kid myself with my life ahead. A lot of friendships grow from common interests, so how's about getting in touch, huh?

Like most kids I get a boot out of my name. It was supposed to be atom-homb, I guess. Well write in soon buddy so our Junior Club House will be assured. Yours truly, Phil Applebaum, 471 45th Ave., San Francisco 21, Calif.

\* \* \*

There it is, kids. Phil says he is twelve years old. I think he has a good idea there. A lot of twelve-year-olds would like to be fans, but they get the hushoff from their more adult brothers.

You kids don't need to publish a fanzine to get in the pages of the Club House. I would be very glad to help you get together and get new recruits to your ranks. You can have a lot of fun

writing to one another and discussing what you think about things.

\* \* \*

*THE GORGON*: 20c, 7/\$1.00; Stanley Mullen, 4936 Grove St., Denver 11, Colorado; Volume Two, Number Two. It says on the index page that the circulation is five hundred. Gorgon is getting in the big business class now. Not long ago I had to sign five hundred form letters on something not related to fandom, fold them, place them in the envelopes, and seal the envelopes. It instilled in me a deep sympathy for kids in school who have to write, "I won't play hookey again," five hundred times on the blackboard.

To print the five hundred Gorgons required eight thousand sheets of paper, seven thousand five hundred of which were printed on both sides. The eight thousand sheets were in sixteen piles. Each issue took a sheet off of each of the sixteen piles. A thousand operations of the stapler and five hundred foldings brought the issue to completion. Five hundred envelopes had to be addressed and stamped. The five hundred envelopes had to each be picked up and a copy of Gorgon slipped into each. The resultant pile of Gorgons ready for the mailman was six feet high.

It took twenty-six thousand operations excluding the typing of the master sheets to produce that stack. Each of those operations took perhaps an average of one second to perform. Allowing five hours for typing out the zine on the verityper, it took a total of thirteen and a half hours to put out the whole issue.

Allowing a half hour for lunch that makes fourteen hours. A nice Saturday's work, with time enough for breakfast and dinner, and perhaps a late show in the evening. (Chuckle.)

Mathematics like that can lead to interesting results. For example, one of the greatest Spanish poets—can't remember his name—wrote a line of poetry for every minute he lived from the minute he was born until the minute he died, with a few extra lines. No time off for eating or sleeping, either.

Joseph B. Baker of P.O. Box 416, Chicago 90, Ill., has a guest editorial in this issue of Gorgon, and should perhaps be awarded something for having coined a new term to add to the list of fan words. He divides humanity into two groups, stf fans, and "normals." A "normal" is one who "is not attuned to imaginative literature." A fan is one who wakes up in the morning and says, "Now today we beat down all resistance."

Paul D. O'Conner writes the first of two articles about Lafcadio Hearn, a writer of the last century, who died in Japan in 1904. After reading Paul's article I was filled with regret that Hearn had not been born fifty years later than he was. If he had he would have been one of the greatest fantasy writers of today.

It's impossible to know how much of fantasy was never written because of a hostile world in those days; but let me ask you this—"How much

of current science fiction would be written if there were no science fiction magazines being published?" If you study that question a moment you will realize that very little of it would.

Phil Rasch writes a comprehensive report of a science fiction West-Coast conference held on September 5th, 1948. The Ebony Tower, a book review section written by Stan Mullen himself is an invaluable part of Gorgon.

There's lots more—six poems, illustrations that would do credit to a promag, and articles and fiction—too much to review. All I can say is that if you aren't one of the five hundred—subscribers—you should be!

**SPACEWARP:** October, 1948; 15c, 9/\$1.00; Arthur H. Rapp, 2120 Bay St., Saginaw, Michigan. The issue leads off with a horror mystery by William James, titled "The Eyes of Roger Akner." The concluding chapter of "The Great STF Broadcast," part nine, is by Jim Harmon. I hate to see this end. Maybe you could start another marathon story, Rapp, huh?

Redd Boggs begins what promises to be a regular feature of Spacewarp called "File Thirteen" in which he promises to dissect whatever he wants to dissect. This time it's reader departments in promags.

Hal Shapiro gives with a report on the Beercon "Burp by Burp." It seems it was held in Milwaukee at Bob Stein's place, Hal, Ed Kuss, George Young, Ben Singer, and Art Rapp coming all the way from Michigan. They made history, Hal says, by being the only fanvention to go wading en masse in Lake Michigan!

On Monday, September 6th, the official Beercon opened. "Came brushing of fangs. Came washing of tentacles. Came the dawn. Came one fan from Chicago (Carr)." Then came the showing of two movies, *The Shape Of Things To Come*, and *The Man Who Could Work Miracles*.

The day ended with Ben Singer composing a song entitled, "Somewhere in this big wide world, there must be a big wide girl for me." The next day the Michigan boys caught the bus back home, stopping off at Chicago and mooching a cup of coffee off of Ray Palmer while they pumped him for all the dirt on Rog Phillips, of which there was a little. Or could it be star dust? And thus ended what must have been a wonderful time for the boys from Michigan.

Closing this issue of Spacewarp is "Quien Sabe?", the letter column.

**ROCKET NEWS LETTER:** August 1948, Journal of the Chicago Rocket Society, 5747 University, Chicago 37, Illinois, Wayne Proell, editor. Considerable improvement in this issue with a printed cover and stapling on the side instead of one at the top left-hand corner as it has been. Bowman and Proell conduct a department on abstracts of items of interest to racketeers. There are 24 such abstracts in this issue.

An interesting article on the origin and composition of the Moon, by N. J. Bowman, points out

the highly interesting possibility that the Moon may be a very rich source of minerals if we ever get there.

They discuss the possibility of radioactives on the Moon, concluding that they are probably more abundant there in available spots than they are on Earth.

The one erroneous conclusion advanced in the article, I think, is that the bulk of meteors on the Moon would be on the side away from the Earth. The occulting solid angle formed by the Earth is about two degrees across, including its atmospheric blanket. That is hardly enough to make any difference in the frequency of meteoric hits. The basic assumption of the article seems to be that the Moon was thrown off from the Earth, and that its composition is "sial crust of the Earth at a time when magmatic separation based on differences in melting point and specific gravity had already taken place."

If you haven't done so, you can get a free copy of the *Rocket News Letter* just for the asking. Thereafter it costs 15c per copy.

**BLOOMINGTON NEWS LETTER:** published bi-monthly by Bob Tucker, P.O. Box 260, Bloomington, Ill.; November 1948. A very well written planographed, four page newszine. In writing for it be sure and send a stamp. Under "People" is the terse report of the several Labor Day stf conventions—or rather, the three. The one at Los Angeles, at Milwaukee, and one at Minneapolis.

Under "What's Going On" Bob Tucker gives brief comments on the more important doing in fandom of general interest. "Books and Writers," and "Visitors to Box 260" complete the news letter and make it a very readable and worthwhile four pages.

**WEIRD UNSOLVED MYSTERIES:** 25c, \$1.00 per year; John Chrisman, General Delivery, Camden, New Jersey. Volume 1, number 1. It's finally happened! This is a fanzine devoted exclusively to gathering together reports on the flying saucers!

This first issue really gives out a wealth of information that has been collected, and more is promised for future issues. It won't be confined exclusively to flying saucers. Perhaps the best way to introduce the zine to you will be to quote John Chrisman's own introduction to his zine.

"We herewith introduce the first issue of *Weird Unsolved Mysteries*, which, incidentally, has been in the planning stage for a long long time. It falls far short of our hopes and ambitions, but even so represents a dream fulfilled—and a considerable amount of hard work.

"The editor has done some traveling in his time, has been in some very strange places, has met some even stranger people. He has talked extensively with all manner of persons, especially with returned service men who have had strange, unusual, and even fantastic tales to tell about experiences and occurrences in the far, lost corners of this planet.

"All of which should make for much thought provoking and interesting reading in the future issues for fantasy and science-fiction fans, as well as other devotees of the unusual. It is our intention to publish accounts of the bizarre and even weird happenings, but always with some sort of factual basis, actual eye-witness accounts and descriptions of things which ostensibly happened, or which very real persons claimed happened, in line with our intended policy of keeping our readers informed intimately as well as up to the minute on TRUE FANTASTIC EXPERIENCES.

"True occurrences, newspaper, and other accounts of alleged phenomena, will be presented as such. If any fiction be presented along the lines of our subject matter, it will be such as to make for further interest and to round out the publication."

So this should be a very valuable addition to the galaxy of fanzines. There aren't any illustrations in this first issue. The zine is typed by a varityper, from its appearance, fourteen pages of condensed material, all factual. I predict a successful future for this zine.

**THE AMTORIAN:** Wallace Shore, 1203 Terry Ave., P.O. Box 1565, Billings, Montana. The most variegated first issue I've seen. Four sheets in three different sizes of paper, with printing and hektoing, each of the four sheets being of different kind of paper. *Amtorian* is to print news of Edgar Rice Burroughs, and also other items of fan interest and contributed by its readers. The size of the issue will be determined in the future by the amount of material to publish. It needs material.

**FANTOPOLOGIST:** Volume 1, number 1; H. T. McAdams, Bethalto, Ill.; "A magazine devoted to the anatomy of extra-dimensional fantasy. It is the express purpose of the zine to popularize topology, or non-metric geometry, especially its implications for science fiction, science, and life in general."

After reading *Fantopologist* It is obvious that McAdams is a good mathematician. He plans to have fiction and other articles in his zine also. So give him a try. I think with a little response he can develop a fanzine that will fill a real need.

—ROG PHILLIPS

# ETHIOPIAN NIGHTMARE

By

C. R. RALSTON



**R**EGARDLESS of the amount of news that has come from little known Abyssinia in recent years because of fascist Italy's pretensions to ruling the country, it still remains relatively unknown. The major and capitol city, Addis Ababa, is such by courtesy only. The Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie, has done and is doing everything in his power to modernize the country and the best place to start with is obviously his capitol city. The result is that it is acquiring a few things like buildings and roads.

But it will be a long time before anything happens that will permit the country to be called modern by even the lowest standards. To see the strange contrast between the ancient and the modern all that is necessary is one look at the city. The primitive people are pathetically proud of the little that they have—but it is so little.

It remained for the fascist adventurers of Mussolini to uncover many of the interesting facts about the peoples. In their series of wars with the Ethiopians, the Italians as everyone knows suffered some severe defeats before their use of modern artillery, planes and poisoned gas enabled them to overcome the rigid resistance. There was an institute in Rome devoted to classifying and documenting the country and from its records we have

many interesting stories about the people and the country.

During the last war, one Captain Luigi Alberano was ordered to establish a communication station some two hundred miles from the main Italian headquarters. With thirty men, four trucks, rifles, machine guns, a one-pounder mountain gun, radio equipment and supplies, Alberano set out to accomplish his mission; there was no organized resistance at the time. Hence all he had to really fear was the guerilla tactics of a few Galla tribesmen who were in the habit of harassing Italian convoys. A good deal of the trip was over desert territory and no opposition at all was encountered by the expedition. The trucks and equipment were competently maintained and the trip proceeded with no more incident than the firing of a few shots at a few lurking skulking figures which might or might not have been natives.

The latter part of the journey was through a roadless grassy section of country covered with trees set in clumps, a fact which enabled the trucks to pass through. Alberano and his men reached their destination without further interruption and set to work to establish this little outpost of the Italian Army.

Four days later they were set upon by a horde



of tribesmen armed with a few smuggled rifles, but for the most part equipped with spears and wooden, fire-hardened swords. The soldiers regarded the attack contemptuously and beat it off without much difficulty, but when it was resumed at night, they found themselves overwhelmed and of the original thirty men and Captain Alberano, seven were captured alive. This was in spite of the fact that they had been indoctrinated thoroughly never to allow that to happen. The cruelties of the natives were strongly played up in all Italian manuals and while exaggerated in many cases, they were true in many also.

Alberano and the six men captured with him watched the natives thoroughly plunder his trucks of everything movable, then burn them. He and the men were stripped completely naked and marched through jungle-like territory for almost two days without food or water. The natives did not however make any efforts to hurt them—then.

**F**INALLY a small native village was reached. Here the soldiers were thrown in a thatched hut of the type to be found all over Ethiopia. They were fed and left alone. Now most Ethiopians are Christians, including the majority of the blacks. Alberano, however, had the misfortune to fall in the hands of the Dasuto tribesmen, notorious for their fierce worship of the ancient tree gods. Alberano, who was the only man to escape and who told the story to the authorities upon his return, described the primitive orgy the natives went through during the sacrificial ceremony.

He said, the first three men were taken from the compound and tied with green ropes to a tree. Then, with exquisite refinement, the natives proceeded to torture the soldiers principally with fire. Alberano repeated often that he had never beard or seen anything so hideous in his life. The natives

were expert knowing just when to stop short of a man's losing consciousness. For three days, the remaining men in the compound were forced to watch and listen to the screams of the tortured men, who frequently fainted and were revived for repetitions of the procedure.

The major part of the affair consisted of wild orgiastic primitive dances accompanying the torture rites. Chants and prayers of a sort seemed to be proffered to the tree-gods. Finally the victims succumbed. It was that night that Alberano escaped and eventually made his way back to Italian quarters. The other men, unfortunately, underwent the same tortures. But the ironic part of the whole thing, is that Alberano succeeded in persuading his superiors to send out aircraft to bunt down this village with the intention of strafing it. Well, this was done, and the village was destroyed, but not a single trace of the natives were found. The empty village was burned to the ground by the incendiary bullets of the planes plus their bombs, but no native was harmed.

Alberano repeated his command and went back with larger forces about three months later. He succeeded in establishing the communications post. He also located the burnt out village. He even went so far as to send punitive expeditions into the surrounding jungle to locate tribesmen, but none of the particular group that had tortured his men were ever found.

Incidents like this were common throughout the whole campaign and greatly contributed to the broken morale of the Italian forces. In fact, for a long time, reports like these were not allowed to be released in Italy for fear of making the war even more unpopular. Today a trip through some sections of Abyssinia is not exactly a pleasure jaunt. The natives are still as ferocious, in spite of attempts at education and reform.

THE END

# EGYPTIAN HORROR

By

★ **ABDULLAH M'EDULLAH ZORAH** ★

**N**ORTHERN AFRICA is covered and laced with the bones of a thousand conquerors. Assyrians, Babylonians, Hittites, Carthaginians, Romans, Frenchmen, Italians, Britons, Germans and the peoples of a thousand different races have covered the trackless wastes of the deserts with their lives. Armies and civilizations have stormed across the barren wastes leaving what they thought were permanent marks—only to have time and the desert obliterate them.

The Egyptians, the ancient Egyptians, however,

were a people of another breed. *They left more than traces of their activities.* One glance at the pyramids, the temples, and the Sphinx is enough to assure anyone that they were an indomitable people.

But, contrary to popular opinion, they left more remains beneath the ground than above. Anyone who at all closely follows the archeological journals will frequently encounter discoveries that are being made every day—discoveries of the remains of the various Egyptian dynasties. This is



not hard to understand. The Egyptians were obsessed with the idea of death. To them, living was merely a brief interlude for the greater things to come, even as we Christians believe, except that they were completely taken with this idea, believing that nothing was of value unless it bore some relationship to the hereafter.

Consequently the tombs of the Egyptians, though they took many forms, all have one thing in common. They were extremely durable. The Egyptians planned that of course. They built better than they knew. Their work was of a most permanent nature.

While the pyramids come immediately to mind, it must be remembered that the shifting sands of the desert buried beneath their endless wind-blown waves, structures even as great, not to mention the host of smaller tombs.

Recently archeologists stumbled upon a number of interesting tombs in the vicinity of Thebes, that great and impressive city of the ancient Egyptians. The tombs were all of the same general form, but their like had not been seen until these present excavations were made in nineteen twenty-seven. The tombs were completely buried under vast quantities of sand. They were shaped like miniature pyramids, truncated pyramidal structures of massive sandstone faced with marble. The tombs number twelve, were about thirty feet on a side and were all in a straight line pointing directly toward the vernal equinox. That fact alone indicates the high calibre of the knowledge available to the ancient craftsmen.

But among these tombs one was of outstanding significance. It housed a peculiar series of tableaux. When the explorers opened it, they discovered that it was essentially nothing more than a vast vacant stone cavern. The floor of the place was littered with bones. Skeletons lay everywhere in the utmost profusion and confusion, apparently scattered for no reason whatsoever. Examination disclosed that the bodies of one hundred and nine people were confined here.

**P**UZZLING over the disarray, the archeologists spent a great deal of time looking for a suitable explanation. It was not long in forthcoming. In a pit on one side of the tomb and sealed from the occupants, was a whole series of stone tablets that explained completely the unusual confusion of the tomb in direct contrast to most Egyptian practices of burying the dead.

Translated the manuscript read:

"I, Thothbones, Prince of Thebes, Keeper of the Holy Flame do consign these unworthy Souls to

the Caverns of Hell."

The manuscript went on in great detail. The Prince had discovered a plot against him, a plan among the priests to dispose of him and place one of their members on the throne. The Prince's agents discovered the conspirators in time and the whole lot was captured.

They were not punished immediately. Instead they were held up to public ridicule and the Prince asked his advisors to tell him of a suitable punishment for the one hundred and nine.

Various tortures all ending in death were suggested. It would be interesting to know what these tortures were, though we can easily imagine them for the Egyptians were past masters at using their ingenuity to devise weird torture schemes. Regardless, none of the ideas appealed to the Prince.

Finally he hit upon a suitable punishment of his own devising. Without food and water, he caused the whole one hundred and nine to be sealed up alive in the stone tomb! Without tools or any chance of escape, yet with sufficient air, these one hundred and nine revolutionists were forced to die of hunger and thirst.

We can only imagine what must have taken place in the tomb. No, that isn't exactly true. The broken bones tell the story. Eventually, the one hundred and nine persons after a few hours or a few days, divided into gangs and attacked each other with cannibalism on their minds. Then when this horror was finished there was no place for the victors to turn except on themselves. And so eventually the strongest must have been reduced to battling among themselves until finally the last victor died of starvation. How long such a hideous nightmare of madness could have gone on, is hardly imaginable. It may have taken months.

All the Prince says in his manuscript is that "I listened with pleasure to the screams of the dying . . ."

In all the annals of human fiendishness, this probably takes the cake, for sheer hideousness. Locked in their terrible tomb, the revoltors tore themselves to pieces, even knowing the hopelessness of trying to live. Yet such is the strong desire for life that resides in the breast of every human, that they will struggle to survive regardless of the indignities they perform must practice and endure.

The real horror in this case was the Prince, whose soullessness and callousness have nothing comparable. How he could have thought of the torture, much less enjoyed it, is unfathomable.

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# DRAWN AND QUARTERED

By

★ **GEORGE ALLEN PHELPS** ★

**T**HE criminal code of most modern civilized nations today provides that the punishment of law-breakers be, above all, humane. It is true that justice is most important, but even above this ideal is the fact that it is necessary that the malefactor be punished in a way that cannot offend the sensibilities of anyone.

In primitive times, all the way up to relatively recent times, this was not the case. The more fiendish the crime, the more horrible and unusual the punishment. Burning, boiling in oil, skinning alive, beating and torturing were common and generally applied methods.

In Elizabethan England as well as in the rest of Europe at that time, the punishment of criminal offenses was unusually severe. Disemboweling was a favorite procedure. Another was the practice of drawing and quartering. Men were stretched on the rack and afterwards their bodies were divided into four quarters. As a warning to potential offenders, bodies were left dangling from gibbets along the roadside. This was a grim and eerie practice.

Often the punishment for thievery was the loss of the right hand. In some parts of the world today, this practice still exists. In Arabia it is common. The thief would have his hand chopped off by an executioner, the open wound would be cauterized with hot tar and the criminal released to live or die but always to act as a warning to others. With the coming of Americans in connection with the extraction of Arabian oil, more humane methods of performing the punishment were introduced. American-Arabian Oil Company authorities appealed to the local emirs to permit the sterilization of the chopping blade and the resultant amputation was treated by a modern surgeon with modern surgical practices.

Among primitive peoples a crime that has always been regarded as particularly abhorrent, is the association with those who attempt to enslave such peoples. In Northern Africa, even today, the wild Berber tribes, nomads all, and bitter opponents even to this day of the colonizing French, have devised hideous methods of dealing with traitors.

These same tortures are often applied to victims of the opposition who fall into their hands. The French Foreign Legion well knows that.

The captive is buried in sand up to his neck and his head is smeared with honey. Imagine, if you can, the acute suffering endured by such a

victim. Without water, unable to help himself at all, the honey attracts to his head all the innumerable sand flies and ants. In short order all that remains of the victim is a bony skeleton buried in the sand.

No less barbaric are some of the tortures used by the American Indian, notably the "green hide." This exquisite refinement involved the wrapping of the criminal in a green cowhide soaked in water. Upon exposure to the sun the hide would gradually, very gradually, dry and contract, squeezing the unfortunate victim like a vise tightened one turn at a time.

The practice of flaying or skinning a victim was another favorite of primitives. This required consummate skill and artistry on the part of the executioner, because human skin is relatively soft and infirm.

What horrors must have gone on in the German concentration camps where this horrible practice was engaged in by some of the brutal sadists operating those chambers of horror.

The technique of burning victims alive reached its highest development in the Inquisition of Spain in the Seventeenth century. The villains of the piece were experts and they were very careful to keep the flames and fire very small, contrary to popular belief. This permitted the victim actually to roast instead of to burn, thus prolonging the agony infinitely.

The Chinese have been noted for unusual punishments, notably the "bamboo splint under the finger nails" and "the water torture." The latter is an exceedingly ingenious and devilish punishment, involving as it does less actual brutal methods and relying more on the subtle refinements of gentle pain and psychology. The steady drip and trickle of water on the victim's head, gradually build to a series of intolerable sledge-hammer blows, but in reality so gentle that the torture can go on for long periods of time though the victim feels as if the next moment is his last.

It is sad to contemplate that the modern knowledge of psychology can outdo the primitives a thousandfold. Thus, in a modern police state, the torturers have at their fingertips refinements of horror so complete that we shudder to think of them. Imagine a psychologist applying torture! Dreadful as the thought is, it is being done every day in some of the police states of the world. What a grotesque mockery of human decency such a practice is!

# DIVINE MERMAIDS



By CHESTER MERKLE



ONE of the most romantic dwellers of the sea was the mermaid, half maiden and half fish. Now she is thought of as an imaginary person present in children's fairy tales, but she once played an important part among the immortals. It was recorded that during the flood in the Netherlands in 1440, some girls that were out rowing a boat found a mermaid. They pulled her up into the boat and took her to the town of Edam, where she received a domestic education. She was made to wear women's clothes, and became very religious, performing her devotions whenever she passed a sacred emblem. There is a similar story of one being found in the Baltic sea in 1531. This mermaid was sent to the court of King Sigismund of Poland. She died within three days. These descendants of illustrious ancestors were merely curiosities, but centuries before they were mother goddesses and assisted in the task of giving light and life to the world. There were mermaids and mermen. Some had human heads and legs, but the rest of their bodies were piscatorial. For example, the great Anu was such a divinity. In very early churches the symbol of the Saviour was a fish. St. Augustine said of Hlm: "He is the great Fish that lives in the midst of the waters."

The fish is a symbol of motherhood because it is a great layer of eggs. It has been sacred to Venus wherever that divinity has been adored. Some species of fish lay so many eggs that if almost all of them were not destroyed before reaching maturity, after a few generations there would be no more room in the ocean. Since the egg is sacred to the mother goddess and fish are the greatest egg producers, they have been ele-

vated to divinity.

Friday was the holy day for Venus and there were two ways of honoring her day. One way was to refrain from eating fish and the other way was to eat fish heartily, reverently, and sacramentally. There have been savage people that would never eat fish. They would die of starvation beside a fish-laden stream before they would offend the All-Mother by eating one of her holy animals.

There was once a belief that by devouring the flesh of certain animals, one could gain their characteristics. By eating the heart of a slain enemy, one would acquire his courage. In some tribes the liver was believed to house the soul, and to eat the liver added strength to your own soul. As fish were considered a divinity, they thought it practical to eat the flesh of a god and by so doing, become like him. Ages ago people used to imitate fish in their devotions. The priests of Nineveh wore things on their hands that looked like the mouth of a fish. Their hats had big circles on each side that represented fish eyes.

The mermaids pictured in fairy tales are alluring creatures that lead sailors astray. Evidently, they were as heartless as they were irresistible. Although the account is inaccurate, we know that there were many temples of Venus which were built on high places overlooking the sea. These temples were placed so that they might be seen by lonely mariners from afar. In these temples, lived girls whose purpose in life was to sacrifice their purity, and to donate the price of their shame to institutions and to the priests of the Queen of Romance. These mermaids were the sirens of the deep, the mermaids that led unwary sailors to their destruction.

# LUCK AND BRAINS



By LEE PRENTISS



IN 1894, Wilhelm Konrad Roentgen discovered a mysterious radiation which he named "x-rays" for want of a better name. That name has stuck. The discovery of x-rays was a combination, in the best possible sense of the phrase "luck and brains," of just that—luck and brains.

Roentgen was an excellent physicist, a man who had published numerous papers of a sound

scientific nature; he was both a practical laboratory man and a theoretical physicist with a thorough mathematical background. Yet, in spite of his accomplishments, his "brains" were aided by the setting of the stage. The time was literally ripe for x-rays' discovery. The point to be made, is that, no matter how excellent the man, the state of a given situation is just as important.

The discovery of x-rays was just such a blend

of luck and skill. The electron had been discovered and more and more scientists were turning to "particle physics"—the study of what happens in gas-filled or evacuated tubes when electric discharges are passed through them. Sooner or later someone else would have made the identical discovery—but it is impossible to take the honor from Roentgen. He showed that his discovery was more than simply luck. That was definitely demonstrated by his shrewd and logical treatment of the subject.

When Roentgen first noticed the peculiar greenish glow on the walls of his discharge tube, and when he first determined that these mysterious emanations were a new type of radiation, he knew exactly what to do and he coldly proceeded to do it.

He suspected that it was an electromagnetic radiation of some sort, probably (as it turned out to be) with a very short wave-length. Working on this basis he proceeded to uncover every property of the unusual rays.

When he finally wrote up his paper—his wife maintained that he did not leave the laboratory for three days—the essential properties of x-rays had been catalogued. It is said—and in truth—nothing new was added to the subject for the next fifteen years. Roentgen had worked so thoroughly. Immediately upon his telegraphing the news to the world, and upon his publication

of the discovery, a thousand different laboratories duplicated the earth-shaking discoveries, which lie directly at the core of modern atomic and nuclear physics.

That is the way the public usually likes to think scientific discoveries are made, when in fact, they are rarely so made. Here was a clear-cut discovery, attributable directly to one man, a complete and comprehensive analysis of the whole thing. But that is rarely the case in science—pure and applied. Usually, many persons each contribute their infinitesimal bit to the whole—when all of a sudden it makes sense. It is most often a painful case of trial and error, experiment and failure—then success—perhaps. How seldom does any scientific invention or discovery proceed down the paths of simplicity trod by Roentgen.

Consequently, even in this highly scientific and logical age, there is more to science and discovery and invention than simply setting out to make such discoveries and inventions—that intuitive spark, that gentle nudge of dame Fortune—all help.

It must be admitted, however, that as time goes on, at least in the physical sciences, more and more of "luck and guesswork" are being taken from the game. Pure reason usually can accomplish what it sets out to—but not always. Even science stops somewhere!

# THE PHANTOM NUN



By FRAN FERRIS



THE rectory in the small hamlet of Borley which is sixty miles northeast of London is the scene of our next ghost story. The rectory was built by the Rev. Henry Bull in 1863, and there he lived with his family of fourteen children for many years. It seems that many years before he built the rectory, this spot had been the site of a monastic establishment. And then there was the story of a novice in a neighboring convent who fell in love with a groom employed by the monks. The lovers tried to elope, but they were caught by the monks, and the man was beheaded. The novice was bricked up alive in the wall of the monastery, and ever since that time she has "walked." One afternoon in the summer of 1900, the nun was seen by three of the reverend's daughters. They were just returning from a garden party when they saw her in the garden with her hands clasped in front of her as though she were saying her prayers. They watched her as she seemed to glide along the path, and one of the girls ran after her. The nun turned and her face wore such an intense expression of grief that the girl was paralyzed with fright. Then she vanished from their sight. Oftentimes she was seen

leaning against the gate, or going along a path which became known as the "Nun's Walk." She looked so life-like that many passers-by asked who she might be. A carpenter from a nearby town had an unusual experience concerning the nun at the rectory. He passed the rectory each morning while he walked to work. It was in the fall of 1927 while the house was not occupied, that he saw the Sister of Mercy standing by the gate of the rectory. To him she looked entirely normal and he thought she must be waiting for someone to pick her up at that early hour. A few days later, as he passed the rectory she was standing by the gate again. He walked a bit closer to her and noticed that her eyes were closed and decided that she was probably tired from attending some sick person all night. As he saw her for several mornings, he saw nothing more unusual about her, but he seemed to experience a sensation of fright to see her standing there so still and deathly pale. Finally he decided that he should offer to help her if he might. But as he came up close to the gate, she was gone. He could not understand how she could vanish in a momentary flash. He went on into town and told his story at the inn where he

was informed of the legend of the nun that haunted the rectory. Fourteen people are known to have seen the nun on several occasions. The case was investigated by none other than an officer of the University of London Council of Psychological Investigation. Together with a London reporter, he visited the old rectory at Borley. They saw her in the garden, but when they would try to come closer, she would disappear into the shrubbery without making a sound. One of the assistants received a message from the nun which

explained her presence at the rectory. It seems that she was terribly sad because she had not received a Christian burial. She wanted a Catholic Requiem Mass with holy water and incense. She gave her name as Mary Lalrre from Havre and said that she was only nineteen at the time of her death. She told where to find her bones and said she hoped someone would uncover them and give her the proper burial that she had for so long desired.

THE END

## DIMINUTIVE RACE

By

★ **ALBERT WEATHERALL** ★

**A**RE the Pigmies of Africa the last remnants of a widespread race of small people? The folklore of many nations is filled with little folks, who now belong to the enchanted childhood realm of fairyland. The dwarfs of Germany, leprechauns of Ireland, trolls of Scandinavian legend, the fairies, elves, sprites and brownies exist in ancient literature. Before the time of writing, they peopled the tales passed on by song and story from generation to generation. It seems probable that such legends were based on fact, and that tiny human beings flourished on the earth at some far distant time.

"There were giants in the earth" in early Biblical days; and then only "the remnants of

the giants." As to any race or tribes of giants since those remote times, we have no indication. Occasionally we find a legendary giant, but these come singly, probably in the nature of a monstrosity, due to an individual's glandular balance being out of kilter, as sometimes happens even today.

But small people were plentiful, in folklore, pointing to the possibility of a widespread race of them. In the battle of survival they were probably ultimately killed off, except for those few who managed to carry on the existence of their kind in Africa, in what are now called the Pigmy tribes.

THE END

## REDISCOVERING LOST MINES

By

★ **C. ATTERBY WOLLENSTEIN** ★

**L**OST MINES have been rediscovered and new mines have been found in the most peculiar ways. For instance, an American engineer had been reading a description of the ancient island of Cyprus, and he became interested in its mineral potentialities. Cyprus had been the chief source of copper for the Romans, and the engineer thought there might still be some deposits on the island, so he went there to find out for himself. He did find ancient pits and huge slag dumps, and finally discovered an important mine.

In South Africa, the very small son of a poor farmer was playing with some shiny pebbles that he had found in the Orange River. The neighbors became curious about them and showed them to

an English mineralogist who recognized them as diamonds. In this way the famous African diamond fields were discovered, turning one of the poorest colonies into a great British dominion.

For centuries before the Spaniards came, the Indians had worked the Muzo emerald mine in Colombia, but they hid its location from the conquistadors. It remained undiscovered for many years until one night when a Spaniard arrived in a small outfit leading his lame mare. When he examined her foot he found a piece of limestone holding a fine emerald imbedded in her hoof. The whole village was wild with excitement and they back-tracked the horse's hoofprints and before many hours had passed, the mine was found.

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## HE HAS BACK ISSUES!

Sirs:

I wonder if you could spare a few lines in your "Discussions" for a personal plug? I'm selling my collection of science-fiction magazines after more than twenty years of collecting, and I figure some of your readers might be interested in buying some of the pioneer stuff in the Stf. field. I have almost every magazine put out in the pseudo-science field from 1926 to 1942, but being a mercenary cuss I'm charging good coin of the realm for them. It goes something like this: For the old "Amazing Stories" of Hugo Gernsbach (circa 1927-1929) and the same Mr. Gernsbach's "Science Wonder" and "Air Wonder" Stories of '29 and '30, I'm asking \$1.00 apiece. For the "Amazing Stories" magazines of 1930-1933 and the "Wonder Stories" of the same period, I want .75c each. Ditto for the old "Astounding Stories" of those same years. (This is the old pre-Street & Smith Astounding.) I'm just stinker enough to ask \$1.50 apiece for the old "Amazing" and "Wonder" Quarterlies, and \$2.50 for 1926 "Amazing." But any magazines after 1933 I'll be glad to get rid of for two-bits a number. This includes such defunct publications as "Marvel Tales," "Dynamic Science-Fiction," "Unknown" and the first ten numbers of "Captain Future."

Getting away from sordid money matters I want to say that although I'm getting rid of hack numbers, I still read the new mags as soon as they hit the stand, and I think your stories are still tops in the field. Without exception, however, the art work is bad. However, this seems to be true of your competitors, too—the general trend seems to be away from good illustrations. What I wouldn't give for a couple of masterpieces by the old time greats like Wesso, Dold, and Marchioni. Isn't there any possibility that you might be able to bring back one of this trio for at least an occasional contribution?

In any case, though, I'll continue to read both "Amazing" and "Fantastic Adventures" as long as the stories retain their present standard—even if

the illustrations are done by the office boy's baby sister.

R. H. Christensen,  
3924 Laurel Ave.,  
Oakland 2, Calif.

*No doubt some of our readers will be glad to see your list of back issues for sale.—Ed.*

## FORTEAN CLUB?

Sirs:

I have been a reader of AS for many years and can say that it is a wonderful magazine.

Something I can't quite understand is why none of the real s-f fans have never come up with the idea of getting together, and trying to find out more about all these so called weird happenings, and oddities of today. There must be some way to get actual facts on such things as, "flying disks," "strange caves," "people vanishing" and other seemingly unexplainable happenings. Either these things are true or false and there must be a way to find out.

I have been trying to collect all kinds of data, but not being able to travel much has made my attempts quite small. I have been thinking of starting a central point or headquarters for all fans to send their information to no matter how small. Then I would try to put it all together and figure things out. When finished I would send all I know to AS and every one could voice their opinion. All I ask is for the fans to be truthful and don't make up false tales.

Who knows what we may find out??? It sounds interesting to me. How about you? I think it's about time some things were straightened out.

If any one else has a similar idea and thinks it's better I would be glad to offer my assistance.

John W. Malone,  
2936 West 29th Street,  
New York City, New York

*This might be a good idea. Why not send all your data direct to the editor, and let him publish a digest of it?—Ed.*



## ERRORS IN A.S.

Sirs:

For a long, long time I have been a reader of your stf mag, and its companion, FA. In fact I used to swipe copies from my father and older cousins way back about 1929 to read in the park where I used to spend most of my time when I was that age. I have always enjoyed the contents and look forward to even better stories in the issues to come. And so to a couple of brickbats I have been saving up. . . .

First of all, please, will your authors remember that there were no B-29's in the ETO of World War II while hostilities existed. No B-29 flew a tactical mission over Germany before V-E Day. Yet, every now and then both in the articles as well as the stories comes the reference to B-29's over Europe in combat. Most recent was in the January 1949 issue under the heading, "Weird Wonders of the War," by Vincent H. Gaddis. He very definitely refers to the B-29's over Germany in the paragraph describing the activities of the "foo lights." If the authors go to all the trouble to make the stories or articles seem logical, why bungle the job with basic inaccuracies? Right away the reader loses interest and disbelieves all else he reads in the particular story or article.

Another glaring oversight appears in "Castle of Terror" by E. J. Liston. The primary plot of the story itself is based on a situation the rules of the Air Traffic Conference of America does not permit. Namely, the transportation of prisoners in airliners. Therefore, no matter how fantastic an airline the author may have hrewed up in his story, it isn't convincing, and you go away feeling cheated after you finish the story.

For an all time high in "double talk" (remember "Mathematica Plus" years ago?), as well as being off in fact again, I refer to the "Supernal Note" by Rog Phillips. And this time the author refers specifically "to a graduate of the TWA school for stewardesses." He goes on to create a very beautiful situation for his hero and mentions a lot of personal attention given him by the young lady. Whether this was a scheduled airline or not, is immaterial. It is sufficient to mention no stewardess on any airline ever devoted as much attention to any one passenger as that one, and still kept her job, that is. Even to playing cards with the guy! There is too much work to serving meals and catering to the wants of the other passengers for one individual to either expect or get such an extreme of personal service.

Now about Shaver. His stories are usually good, I'll admit that. But why all that goes with it outside the stories? If he thinks he has the facts okay, but when it gets to the point it becomes a cult or religion and is crammed down our throats on every side, then it isn't entertainment, and count me out. It crops up in stories by other authors too, that's what hurts. Mentions of Dis, Dem, and Dos rays! I think he is extremely clever to have thought of something new and

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logical enough to have caught on so well. It sells magazines, and lines his pockets. But I read the stories for entertainment only, and have no intention of losing any sleep worrying about caves full of Deros. If, after all, it is the truth, what does he want us to do about it? Try anything like he suggests, and the men with the white coats would cart you away. Let's keep it in story form, and for entertainment only. Never mind the elaborate build up in the rest of the magazine, and the supporting roles played by the rest of the staff.

The "Return of Tharn" by Howard Brown was very good. Would like to see more by the same author. Livingston, Geier, and Francis too. But for one of the all time greats give me A. Merritt's "The Ship of Ishtar." Wish he were still writing. The newer authors will really have to dig to surpass this . . . I'm glad we've outgrown the B. E. M's. May they never, never return! . . . As far as the love interest in stories is concerned, leave it in, but def! Not to the point where it becomes a romantic magazine, of course. But it is very much a part of every day life, and I doubt whether any race has ever existed where it didn't play a prominent part, and if history is any criterion, the future should run pretty much the same as the past. As far as the stories about other planets and the type of life found there is concerned, I think they make better reading when at least the basic facts of life are something like ours anyhow, and boy meets girl never seems out of place.

I don't think either the stories or illustrations have ever had any hint of obscenity in them. In fact I was very, very surprised to find the obviously bigoted viewpoint one reader expressed not long ago. I thought one of the things all of us readers of stf had in common was our open minds. If he thinks AS is obscene, what does he think of the legal views exposed on any bathing beach all summer long? That should satisfy even the most lecherous!

Keep the editorial standards as they are now and thanks for listening.

Lee J. Verzatt,  
126 So. Oraton Pkway.,  
East Orange, N. J.

Thanks for correcting us on those technical points.—Ed.

### SHOUP ANSWERS

Sirs:

The letter which I wrote claiming a suspicious resemblance between Shaver's "Gods of Venus" and Burrough's "Gods of Mars" apparently aroused quite a storm. However, I do not feel that your remarks in answer to my letter proved too much. It is true that many stories will have similar plots, but I still feel that Shaver's story passed beyond the "similarity" stage. As far as the "Tharn" series—they do not have much resemblance to any of Burrough's stories, unless you take into consideration that "The Land That Time Forgot" was about similar circumstances. I think

the "Tharn" stories were very good, had original plots, and are perfectly capable of standing on their own merits.

Several of your readers sent in letters which were unfairly maledictory in condemnation of my opinion. I am not a professional griper, nor am I "anti-Shaver." Shaver is a good author in his own rights; his cave stories have been interesting reading, as well as other stories by him. (An exception is his article on the Cyclops in the January issue; all I can say to that little article is Ugh!, and I'm not a full blooded Indian either!)

I read your magazine regularly, as well as all the other publications of scientific-fantasy nature, and I enjoy all of them. It is impossible for any magazine to maintain a record of articles and stories acceptable to all the readers; it would be a trifle ridiculous to quit reading any one magazine just because one story by one author is a little "off." (In answer to Georgia Bartbolmew and Miss Trainor in January Discussions.)

Forrest O. Shoup,  
246 Hamilton Ave.,  
Long Beach, N. J.

P.S.—I might add that all the stories in the January issue were exceptionally good, especially "The Flea Circus" and "The Robot and the Pearly Gates."

*Not so long ago we read a story in the Saturday Evening Post which was beyond the similarity stage to one of our early science fiction stories. What does that prove?—Ed.*

## PAPER SHORTAGE

Sirs:

After reading the Jan. issue of A.S. I received a surprise if not a shock;—Well, what do you know, "Discussions" is finally back, and I hope that it's back to stay with us permanently this time. Also, I would like to see a longer letter column with say, six or seven pages at least. Then, what about A.S. and F.A.? Don't you think that we should have a thicker magazine instead of the customary 154 pages? All right, you don't have to tell me, I know. "There is a paper shortage(?)." How many times have I heard that before. But it seems as if one of your competitors is doing all right, and although they have raised their prices, at least they are giving the public more pages for the money. And I would not mind it at all if you totally eliminated the archaeology and anthropology from the contents of A.S. and F.A., since I would rather have more fiction to read than a study of the sciences. You can easily take care of this detail by printing a separate magazine that would include all the 'logies. Now for the plug. I happen to have a few hook cases full of fantasy and STF books that I'd like to trade with anyone that would also be interested in making some worthwhile exchanges. I have such books as "The Croquet Player" by H. G. Wells; "Allan Quatermain" by Haggard; "Thuvia Maid of Mars" by



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Burroughs; "The Babyons" by Clemence Dane; "Deluge" by S. Fowler Wright; "All Sorts and Conditions of Men" by Walter Besant; "Right Off the Map" by C. E. Montague; "The Other Passenger" by John Kier Cross; "Galahad" by John Erskine; and a roomful of other books by Haggard, Burroughs, Merritt, etc. etc. So, anyone that is interested in swapping STF items magazines and books can join in and write me as soon as they can. Meanwhile, do the best work you can on A.S. and F.A. and you can be sure that it will be equally be appreciated by us fans.

Thomas Beck,

271 Dartmouth street,  
Boston 16, Mass.

The publisher you are referring to owns his own paper mill! Sigh!

L. Taylor Hansen's articles have set an all-time record for popularity. We will begin a new series of his articles soon.

No doubt those books you mention will intrigue someone!—Ed.

## CHARLES FORT

Sirs:

I have just finished your January issue of Amazing Stories and I don't think it quite stacked up to your usual standards. "The Robot and the Pearly Gates" was the best of the lot with the novel "Dinosaur Destroyer" at the tail of the list. It could have been a very good story but there was too much jumping from past to present in it.

Your features were of the best as usual and I would like to know where I can get some books by Charles Fort. Can you help me out?

Your cover painting by J. Allen St. John was very good. Too bad the story didn't match up.

I am unusually interested in the unusual and unexplainable so if you will, please give me the dope on Charles Fort and his publishing company. Thanks.

Bud

Charles Fort's books are published by Henry Holt & Company in New York.—Ed.

## COVER CAUGHT HIS EYE

Sirs:

I have just finished reading the Jan. issue of your magazine, AMAZING STORIES. The best story was "Dinosaur Destroyer" by Arthur Petticoles. This would make a good base for a new series of stories for the future. Let's have some as soon as possible. The second best was "The Invasion of the Bone Men," by John Stuart Walworth. It kept my attention to the end although some parts sounded like "The Skeleton Men of Jupiter," by Edgar Rice Burroughs.

That's all for the stories. The rest of them were not so good. The art work is very good throughout the entire magazine. The cover is what really caught my eye. More covers like that one wanted.

And now for the articles. The best were "The Cyclops," by Richard S. Shaver and "Shaverian Sidelights," by Vincent H. Gaddis. One question I would like to ask Mr. Shaver is when is the next issue of his magazine coming out? The next thing I have to say is that the Discussions Dept. isn't long enough.

Well, I guess that is all for this issue, so please print this in your next edition of A.S.

Charles Corrigan,  
1225 Bloomfield St.,  
Hoboken, N. J.

P.S.—Could anybody tell me Mr. Shaver's address. I had it, but we moved and it got lost. Thank you.

Box 74, Rt. 2, Lily Lake, McHenry, Illinois.  
—Ed.

### HANSEN'S ARTICLES

Dear Sir:

Having been a reader of AMAZING STORIES since it started in April, 1926; this is the first time I have ever written to say anything about the stories.

Naturally I am an addict of S.F. or I would not have read it for so many years; and I think that, the stories, while varying in quality, have been steadily improving with the years.

Why I take pen in hand to write is this—will L. Taylor Hansen's articles continue to be published in your magazine?

Will these articles be published in book form at some future time?

Will they be cut or altered in any way?

I am making a scrapbook containing them, tho I missed some of the earlier ones.

William D. Johnson,  
63 Liberty Ave.,  
Somerville, Mass.

Yes, Mr. Hansen's articles will continue to be published. He plans to publish in book form later on, but has not done so yet. They will be expanded, rather than cut.—Ed.

### YEAR'S BEST

Sirs:

I have been reading "AMAZING STORIES" for three years, and I say without hesitation "AS" is, by far, the best pulp in the field of "STF."

Following is my report on your mag for the year "1948":

Jan.—"Flight of the Starling," by C. Geier—you should have more of this type.

Feb.—"Prometheus II," by S. J. Byrne—the year's BEST story.

Mar.—"Gods of Venus," by R. S. Shaver—not as good as his previous "cave" series.

Apr.—"The Wandering Egos," by E. McDowell—an excellent "Racial Memory" story by a new writer.

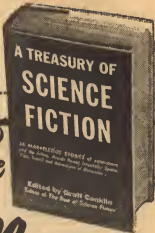
May—"Armageddon," by C. Browning—SUPERB, a close second.

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June—"Ice City of the Gorgon," by Geier & Shaver—something is lacking.

July—"That We May Rise Again," by C. Recour—Chas. has acquired that "Rog Phillips" touch.

Aug.—Excellent issue—"Starship from Sirius," by Rog Phillips—CLASSIC.

Sept.—UGH, a bad issue—"Titans Daughter," by R. S. Shaver—poor for Shaver.

Oct.—"The Brain," by A. Blade—I'm still shaking!!

Nov.—"The Return of Tharn," by H. Browne—Is Mr. Browne going to give us more?

Dec.—"Beyond the Thunder," by H. B. Hickey—the year's 3rd BEST novel.

Chas. A. Gervasi,  
95 Chestnut St.,  
Franklin, Mass.

Thanks for your list of the best stories of the year. It helps a lot to have such comments. We will do even better next year!—Ed.

## ANTARCTICA—AND OUR FUTURE

By  
PETE BOGG

THE ANTARCTICA is by far the coldest spot on earth. The only year round inhabitants are a few emperor penguins and some seal that live in pockets under pressure ridges in the bay ice. All other life, such as whales and birds, are only summer tourists. The continent is a huge plateau with an average altitude of 8,000 feet. It is not known definitely how much of this is due to the thickness of the ice-cap, but there are probably some areas where the snow is 2,000 feet thick. The area within the circle is about thirty degrees colder than the Arctic, and the wind velocity averages about fifty miles an hour. Because of its high winds and bitter cold, Antarctica is a great weather-maker, and has an effect on the weather throughout the world.

Exploration has shown that Antarctica is an untouched reservoir of natural resources. Missing links in the chain of science may be found at the bottom of the world, links that will help us to complete our knowledge of the planet we live on.

Antarctica may become a great cold-weather proving ground for the Army, Navy and Air Force. Men and planes and ships that have carried on military operations south of the circle will have no trouble in the far north.



# WHY CANNIBALISM?

By  
M. MORSE

WHEN white explorers first penetrated the realms of the primitive peoples of Africa, they discovered with incredulous horror that cannibalism was an established custom among many of the tribes.

Resorting to human flesh as food has been known to occur throughout the world, and in all ages, but instances have been scattered, and rare, and in practically all cases have been occasioned by stark hunger, where man's strongest instinct, that of self-preservation, has overcome every other consideration. When no other food of any kind is available, and a man is on the verge of death from starvation, the eating of human flesh is perhaps understandable.

The custom of cannibalism among the primitive natives of Africa probably originated in a time of prolonged famine; and by a process of heredity and the warlike proclivities of those savage people, it developed into a cult. Certainly it was not hunger which caused these people to continue eating their fellow men, for they lived in a tropical climate and were surrounded with an abundance of animal and vegetable life. The practice appeared to be entirely separate from that of human sacrifice and other such rites connected with the religious sentiments of a people. The only explanation for the continuance of the custom seems to be that it was the result of greediness, and a depraved appetite. Those savages ate human flesh because they liked it. It was the accepted thing to do.

A curious aspect of the gruesome habit is that the tribes among which it was most prevalent had achieved a certain amount of social advancement. A slight degree of intelligence had to be attained

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by a people before they began the custom of consuming their own kind. It is a fact that the lower animals, with only a few exceptions, do not devour each other. No traces of the custom have ever been found among paleolithic man. Among African tribes in the primitive conditions first discovered by the white race, those who practiced cannibalism were not inferior to other tribes; the contrary was apt to be the case.

That the habits of certain tribesmen included the seemingly unnatural practice of cannibalism, did not appear to affect or retard the development of better habits and emotions. The conduct of domestic and tribal affairs of cannibalistic groups was often superior to that of other uncivilized people on the African continent.

From a scientific standpoint, there seems to be no reason why properly cooked human flesh should not be nutritious. Those people who practiced cannibalism as a normal part of every-day life were reported to possess physical attributes comparing favorably with the tribes which abhorred the practice. And yet the mystery remains, why the horrible custom should have been continued in a country so plentifully supplied with better foods of all kinds.

The horror and disgust displayed by the white men at the practice soon caused the native people to feel ashamed of it. The custom which seemed to degrade them in the eyes of the whites made them feel guilty. Those who carried on the custom began to do so evasively, furtively hiding the distasteful acts. Punishment by the white men helped to eradicate the habit, as did the gradual progress of civilization throughout what was once known as the darkest continent.

## GALLOPING GHOSTS

By  
LEE HENDERSON

AMONG all the ghost stories that are often repeated, the experience of encountering a huge cavalcade is told quite frequently. The Reverend Bull told of hearing the distant sound of oncoming horses as he was coming up the road to his house. As the sound became louder, he pressed his body against the wall by the side of the road to let them go past. He heard the horses gallop by, but he saw nothing. The sound of pounding hoofs lasted for at least five minutes and then faded away in the distance.

A theory has been put forth that since no form of energy is ever lost, that every scene and sound is registered somewhere in the ether, and that on rare occasions, some person with the proper sensitivity happens along that spot and is able to pick up the vibrations and to see the scene on the screen of his consciousness. Thomas Edison became very interested in psychical mysteries and said that someday a radio set would be made to be able to pick up words and sounds of the past.

This incident of a scene recurring happened more than three hundred years ago in Northamptonshire and was vouched for by many good witnesses.

The battle of Edge Hill was fought between the Royalist army of King Charles the First and the Parliamentary army under the Earl of Essex, on October 23, 1642. There was a very hard battle but the result was indecisive. This is the most preposterous account of two vast armies of ghosts returning to the battlefield to fight all over again the battle of Edge Hill.

Two nights before Christmas in 1642, some country folks witnessed the ghostly reenactment of the battle which had been fought two months before. At first they heard the distant sound of drums and the moans of dying soldiers. They stood still and the sounds drew nearer. Suddenly there appeared in the air, the same incorporeal soldiers that made all the noise. Their muskets and cannon were going off, the horses were neighing. The two armies charged each other, and the battle was in full swing for three hours in the dead of night. The men were so terrified that they could hardly believe their eyes and ears, but they dared not run. After many hours, the army flying the King's colors withdrew, or seemed to fade away. The other army, triumphant, stayed for awhile on the battlefield expressing the joy of conquest. Then with all their drums, trumpets and artillery, they vanished.

The frightened men hurried into town and told the local dignitaries, and together with other townsfolk, they returned to the same spot the next night. For two hours they all witnessed the battle as it had been fought the previous night. Then for a week nothing happened till the following Saturday night when the battle raged again for many hours. It wasn't long before the matter came to the attention of the King, and he sent three officers to investigate and put a stop to this absurd rumor. The King's representatives took down the reports from the witnesses, and then decided to stay on themselves to see if anything would happen. Much to their amazement, on the following Saturday night, they saw the identical action fought all over again. The picture was so vivid that they recognized the faces of some of the officers that had been slain during the original battle. So they reported back to His Majesty and swore that the testimony they had given him was the truth.

## ZEUS, RULER OF OLYMPUS

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in the abstract, Zeus governed the seasons, day and night and other regular happenings. Zeus watched over the community in a benevolent way. Zeus watched the activities of the gods, seeing that each performed his or her duty. And finally Zeus watched over man, succoring him when appealed to, punishing him when necessary.

The father of the gods and Hera his wife lived on Mount Olympus, far above the clouds, and here, in a highly ethereal atmosphere youth reigned forever. Everything in Olympus was of gold and silver, ebony and ivory, all constructed by the heavenly artisan, Hephaestus.

In Grecian worship, Zeus is always pictured as a patrician benevolent figure, a patriarchal, yet young and powerful god, hearing in his right hand a sheaf of thunder-bolts and wearing a crown of oak leaves.

Temples were erected everywhere in Greece to him, and the most famous of his statues was that one done by the Athenian sculptor, Phidias, who created in ivory and gold, a statue of Zeus over forty feet high! Zeus in fact, was one common denominator which served to bind the ancient Greeks together somewhat, for they existed in a multitude of petty states.

The favorite animal of Zeus was the eagle, capable of gazing unblinkingly upon the sun. Zeus had seven immortal wives. They were Metis, Themis, Eurynome, Demeter, Mnemosyne, Leto and Hera. Metis was a sea-nymph capable of

prophesying. From her union and Zeus sprang the goddess Athena, of wisdom and armed justice.

Themis was goddess of Justice and Law. Eurynome mothered the famous Graces. Demeter was the goddess of Agriculture. Mnemosyne brought forth her daughters the Muses, and was the goddess of Memory. Leto seems to have been the most unfortunate of Zeus' many wives. It seems that Hera was jealous of her extreme beauty, so she caused the poor Leto to be terrorized and tormented by a huge serpent, Python. To protect her from Hera's jealousy, Zeus created the island of Delos, where she found refuge from Python and where she gave birth to the twin god and goddess, Apollo and Diana, the two most beautiful of the immortals.

Zeus also united with many mortals, Antiope, Leda, Europa, Callisto, Alcmena, Semele, Io and Danae. With each of these he had numerous adventures.

It is interesting to note that Zeus visited the Earth frequently and had many adventures. Among the Romans, whose version of Zeus was the equally famous Jupiter, we find that he always appears aloof, remote and confined to heaven. This seems to indicate that the Greeks were certainly more given to romanticism than their colder counterparts. Jupiter whose role was identical to that of Zeus is not the warmer, more human god that we know the Greeks loved. Zeus seems more real.

*Horace Loveright*

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